Maurizio Arfaioli

The Black Bands of Giovanni

8 Ioh. Med. cum impetum Germanorū Borbonio duce crebris prælijs reprimeret, tardaraqz, cumqz pro libertate Italiæ acerrime pugnaret tormenti minoris ictu 29 annum agens præ dolore occumbit

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Maurizio Arfaioli

The Black Bands of Giovanni

Infantry and Diplomacy during the Italian Wars (1526-1528)

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Bruno Orcesi

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To my family
To my maestri

" ... fit rumor in astris
et montagnarum culmina celsa tonant.
Numquid erunt Sguiceri? Numquid Vascona canaia?
Numquid gens verbis Italiana bravis?
Ista Todescorum numquid plebs apta bocalo?
Mandat descalzos num quoque Spagna suos?".

[... a terrible noise springs out among the stars
and the tops of the highest mountains rumble.
Could it be the Swiss? Could it be the Gascon canaille?
Could it be the Italians, with their bold words?
Is that the German rabble fit for the tankard?
Or could it be Spain sending her tramps?]

Teofilo Folengo, *Moschaea* T. II, vv. 39-44

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes for the principal archives and manuscript sources:

ASF: Archivio di Stato, Florence
Delib. Cond. e Stanz. : Deliberazioni, Condotte e Stanziamenti
Signori, Dieci, Otto: Signori, Dieci di Balìa, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e commissarìe, Missive e Responsive
ASMn: Archivio di Stato, Mantua
ASMo: Archivio di Stato, Modena
ASV: Archivio di Stato, Venice
BOP: Biblioteca Oliveriana, Pesaro
BNCF: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence
CO.DO.IN.: Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España
RAHM, CSC: Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, Colección de don Luis Salazar y Castro
ms., mss.: manuscript(s)
f., ff.: folio(s)
vol., vols.: volume(s)
cit.: cited
// writing in cipher \\
[translation]

footnotes: when the place from which the letter was written is not indicated, it means 'ex castris', that is 'from the camp'.

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Foreword

This volume has its roots in paradox. "Giovanni delle Bande Nere" has long been a well-known figure in Italian history. Son of Caterina Sforza, famous for defending Forlì against Cesare Borgia, and father of Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke and later Grand Duke of Tuscany, Giovanni quite literally represents a genetic link between the Renaissance world of small and mobile Italian states, celebrated by Burckhardt, and early modern Europe. In the later 16th and 17th centuries Italy perhaps played a more marginal role, but among Giovanni's descendants were born two queens of France.

Little of what is "known" about Giovanni corresponds to historic fact. Giovanni's larger-than-life image is a product of the success of his descendants and the development of national discourse in Risorgimento Italy. Giovanni was celebrated as the dashing commander of a famous Italian military company, the "Black Bands". He was immortalised as their heroic though tragic commander. Arfaioli tells us that the Bands became black only after Giovanni's death, and turns the tables on received opinion. The subject of the book is not their one-time leader, but the Bands themselves in the context of Italian politics and warfare in the 1520s.

Arfaioli's task is to bring a number of questions, debates, convictions and anachronistic commonplaces back into contact with reality. The political world of the early 16th century was a mobile playing field where diverse hypotheses about how power and consent could be organised were tested – through war, diplomacy, and political discourse, in the courts and in the *piazze*. Historians of different countries and different political and methodological orientation have viewed early modern Italy as a nation-state manqué. Today, fortunately, it can be studied for what it was, a particularly complex part of the European political space, an important area in the experimentation of new political, military and social structures and practices that were transforming the continent. As this volume abundantly illustrates, change was rapid during the Italian Wars, and invested much broader issues than military technique. Political and military organisation, finance and the complications of command were quite as significant.

This volume offers us a vivid insight into the mental horizons of the time through the eyes of the protagonists. The Florentine commissioner, Lorenzo Martelli, forced to mediate between his city's governing bodies, the Bands and Orazio Baglioni, while his son is in the hands of the enemy; the vainglorious French commander, Lautrec; and Blaise de Montluc, struggling destitute back to France after the stunning defeat of Lautrec's army at the siege of Naples, are only three of the dramatis personae whom we shall not forget.

It is a pleasure to present this important and enthralling book.

Ann Katherine Isaacs
University of Pisa

Figure 1
Gian Paolo Pace, *Portrait of Giovanni de' Medici*, 1545 (Museo degli Uffizi, Florence).
Commissioned by Pietro Aretino from the painter Gian Paolo Pace (a very poor substitute for Titian, who was Aretino's first choice) this is the oldest and most faithful portrait of Giovanni de' Medici, in that it was done using his death mask (made by Giulio Romano) as a model, and following the specifications of the controversial *condottiere* of literature. In this portrait "Sua Alterezza Giovanni" [His Haughtiness Giovanni], as Aretino once called him, is viewed from the side, equipped as a light cavalryman, with his right hand resting on a burgonet.

Introduction. The Non-Existent Hero: Giovanni of the Black Bands

"– Ah blessings on you, white knight! But tell us who
you are, and why you keep your helmet shut? –
– My name is at my journey's end –".

Italo Calvino, *The Non-Existent Knight*

This is one of the few cases in which it is necessary to explain the title before tackling the actual subject of the book. As an Italian historian, I was intrigued by the idea of devoting part of my English doctoral dissertation to the famous *condottiere* Giovanni de' Medici (1498-1526; Figure 1). Known as 'Giovanni delle Bande Nere' [Giovanni of the Black Bands], at the head of his black-clad troops he is an integral part of my country's folklore. It was therefore with considerable embarrassment that, during one of our first meetings, I had to tell my supervisor that the figure we both thought would become the *pièce de resistance* of my dissertation had, technically speaking, probably never existed.

Today Giovanni's name is still largely linked to the heroic and tragic figure created by historians and writers during the Italian Risorgimento. Anyone who has read one of the numerous biographies published from the nineteenth century on [1] 'knows' that the famous *condottiere* had his troops' flags blackened to mourn the passing of his patron and distant relative Pope Leo X (Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici) in 1521. This knowledge is based almost entirely on a passage in the *Mémoires* of Martin du Bellay [2] concerning the arrival of Giovanni and his troops in the French camp in 1522, words that as a young person I knew almost by heart. Nevertheless, when I began what I thought would be a routine check to confirm du Bellay's statement, I found that, according to other sources – such as the works of Bernardo Segni [3], Filippo Nerli [4] (Giovanni's brother-in-law), Benedetto Varchi [5], Giovangirolamo de' Rossi [6] (Giovanni's half-nephew and first biographer), Marco Guazzo [7] and Blaise de Montluc [8], the Bands became 'Black' after Giovanni de' Medici's

[1] For an up-to-date general overview of how the figure of Giovanni de' Medici was handled by his descendants and elaborated by Italian culture, as well as a vast bibliography on the subject, see F. Vossilla, *Giovanni, un eroe dinastico e la sua immagine* and I. Taddei, *Il fantasma del Principe. La figura di Giovanni delle Bande Nere tra Illuminismo e Fascismo*, in *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere*, edited by M. Scalini, Florence, Banca Toscana, 2001, pp. 273-309.

[2] M. du Bellay, *Mémoires de Messire Martin du Bellay*, in *Collection universelle des mémoires particuliers, relatif a l'histoire de France*, Paris-London, 1786, vol. XVII, pp. 205-206.

[3] B. Segni, *Istorie Fiorentine dall'anno 1527 al 1555 scritte da Bernardo Segni*, Florence, Barbéra, 1857, p. 20.

[4] F. Nerli, *Commentari dei fatti civili occorsi dentro la città di Firenze*, Trieste, C. Coen, 1859, vol. II, p. 23.

[5] B. Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, edited by L. Arbib, Florence, Società Editrice delle Storie del Nardi e del Varchi, 1843-1844, vol. I, pp. 122-23.

[6] Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni de' Medici*, cit., pp. 92-94.

[7] M. Guazzo, *Historie di messer Marco Guazzo di tutti i fatti degni di memoria nel mondo successi dell'anno 1524 fino a questo presente*, Venice, Appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1546, pp. 49-50.

[8] B. de Montluc, *Mémoires de Messire Blaise de Montluc, Maréchal de France*, in *Collection Universelle des Mémoires particuliers relatifs à l'Histoire de France*, Paris-London, 1786, vol. XXII, p. 71.

death in 1526, and not before. This made me realise that Giovanni and 'his' Black Bands had both existed, but probably not at the same time, and that 'Giovanni of the Black Bands' was in fact a posthumous title. Even worse, as I proceeded in my survey it soon became clear that much of what I thought was known about Giovanni de' Medici and his men was actually the product of a complicated game of mirrors. Literary and historiographical invention had played with both for centuries. Once the doublings, distortions, errors, and the most obvious romantic and nationalistic exaggerations were removed, the vast literature on Giovanni de' Medici turned out to be based on disproportionately scanty evidence.

In some ways, Giovanni of the Black Bands appeared to be no more substantial than Agilulf Emo Bertrandin of the Guildivern and of the Others of Corbentraz and Sura, Knight of Selimpia Citeriore and Fez, the 'Non-Existent Knight' created by the great Italian novelist Italo Calvino (1923-1985): an immaculate but empty suit of armour that had begun to talk and act like a man, taking its place among Charlemagne's paladins purely out of a sense of duty because, at some point, it had been given a name and a title. Tireless and constantly in the right, Agilulf fought battles, faced all kinds of misfortune and marched through the complicated tangle of human relations without ever getting dented or even dirty in the process.

Examining the long process of historical and literary revision of which Giovanni and his men were both protagonists and victims, I wondered whether it would be more profitable to study Giovanni or the Black Bands. The former was no longer the obvious answer. To observe the practice of war in the Early Modern Age and the interactions between the changing realities of the battlefield and the political world in today's historiographical practice does not require the presence of a great hero – or villain.

As I was going back over the phases of the creation of the myth of Giovanni of the Black Bands, I realized that Giovanni (whose baptismal name was actually Ludovico) and his men, regardless of the colour they wore and of the name that identified them, had been used as a benchmark for Italian military achievements during the first half of the sixteenth century long before they were turned into legends.

Granted Giovanni's incredible energy and undeniable tactical genius (more than off-balanced by his very poor sense of political expediency) and the precocious and widespread posthumous fame first guaranteed to him by the deep personal link he had established with the gifted *condottiere* of literature (as his friend Titian called him) Pietro Aretino [9] (1494-1556), and subsequently by the campaign of glorification orchestrated by his son Cosimo I

[9] P. Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino*, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 1997, pp. 84-86; G. Galasso, *Pietro Aretino nel suo contesto storico: il papato, la Francia, l'Impero*, vol. I, pp. 297-331 and L. Mulas, *L'Aretino e i Medici*, vol. II, pp. 535-572, both in *Pietro Aretino, nel cinquecentenario della nascita (Atti del Convegno di Roma-Viterbo-Arezzo-Toronto-Los Angeles)*, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 1995. The analysis of the figure of Giovanni de' Medici in Aretino's letters would require a separate literary study. Of particular interest for the birth of the myth of Giovanni are his letters to Francesco degli Albizzi and to Maria Salviati-de' Medici, respectively Giovanni's treasurer and widow, written by Aretino in the aftermath of the *condottiere*'s death. Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, edited by F. Erspamer, Parma, Fondazione Pietro Bembo, 1995, vol. I, pp. 16-31.

[10] Practically all works on the life of Giovanni are directly or indirectly based on the two different manuscript versions, denominated A (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, II I 174, ff. 1r-36r) and R (Florence, Biblioteca

that Giovanni de' Medici came to excel. In fact, he became famous for having organized the first really prestigious unit of Italian infantry of the pike-and-shot era. These infantry troops made the death of their master their flag; establishing their own legend, they celebrated his military apotheosis in the most fitting way.

However, this very infantry was quickly to become a mere decorative element in the celebration of the figure of Giovanni as the famous and heroic father of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici, second *pater patriae* of Florence. Obviously, everyone in Italy understood the absolutely central role which the infantry played in warfare, but the 'technical' merits of an infantry commander – even in the case of the greatest – simply were not a part of the Italian celebrative vocabulary of those times. Moreover, at that stage, the Black Bands and Giovanni himself were only a background element among the many surrounding the exalted name of the Medici family, to whose fortunes his figure remained solidly anchored until the end of the eighteenth century.

Things did not change substantially during the Risorgimento, when Giovanni de' Medici, until that moment a dynastic hero, achieved the status of national hero. The Black Bands re-emerged, but only as part of the new image to extol Giovanni of the Black Bands, an outsider who had earned through his deeds a name that set him apart from the very beginning of his career both from his family (considered by then a corrupt stock of tyrants), and from his 'lowly' mercenary colleagues. Eventually, the epithet Giovanni of the Black Bands became so successful that it replaced Giovanni de' Medici. Ironically, this superimposition almost completely erased the memory of the independent existence of the Black Bands themselves after Giovanni's death, reducing them to a mere extension of the courage of an exceptional individual. The projection of the Black Bands on the figure of Giovanni was carried to extremes by the militaristic rhetoric of the Fascist regime, which took Giovanni and company on board with enthusiasm in the tragicomic attempt at establishing an ideal parallel between the sixteenth-century *condottiere*, Mussolini, and their respective bands of black-clad followers. Finally, the unreasonably protracted aversion to the subject of warfare shown by Italian historians after the Second World War, and the consequent lack of a general progressive review of the traditional sources of early modern military history according to the criteria of modern historical research – wrongly considered a superfluous undertaking – have caused the legend of Giovanni of the Black Bands to reach us substantially intact [12].

The aim of this volume is to redefine and reassess the role of Giovanni and his men within the broader picture of the Italian Wars. Once again this means taking on a complicated national tradition. Italian military historiography since the Risorgimento has confused the concept of military tradition with that of nation. Up to very recent times, historiographically speaking, the lack of an autonomous national strategic horizon in the 'dark' centuries of foreign domination was considered a factor that necessarily impeded the proper development of the Italian military. Italian Risorgimento and Nationalist historians, with their viewpoint firmly defined by institutions such as the nation-state and national armies could

[12] P. Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare italiana*, Turin, Einaudi, 1952, pp. 607-608. The perceptive (if now outdated) analysis of Giovanni made by the historian Frederick Lewis Taylor in his *The Art of War in Italy, 1494-1529*, London, Greenhill Books, 1993 (reprint ed. 1921) remains remarkable.

only conclude that Renaissance Italy had been utterly defeated on the military plane, and this substantially invalidated every result occurring outside the 'proper' framework. Even according to the great Italian military historian Piero Pieri (1893-1979), whose works are still today the basis for most Italian historiography on the Italian Wars, the grave incapacity of Renaissance Italy to create a real 'national' infantry condemned Italy to centuries of domination by the abhorred *straniero* [foreigners]. The bold Giovanni de' Medici and his troops had also been just the exponents of the highest quality of an unquestionably negative trend [13].

However, the fortunes and the evolution of military entrepreneurship followed a distinct pattern with respect to those of the states, and nothing showed this more clearly than the fact that the militarily rather weak and backward Florentine state was also the cradle and main recruiting ground of one of the most successful Italian military enterprises of the period, that of Giovanni de' Medici. The world of the Italian military entrepreneurship to which Giovanni belonged neither was nor felt itself to be falling apart – it was, on the contrary, in full growth. Undoubtedly, as it blended (figuratively speaking) easily with the background, the pattern followed by the evolution of the Italian infantry during the wars of European supremacy fought in the Italian peninsula is more difficult to interpret and identify than the pattern of the foreign infantries. Nevertheless, in Italy the service in the mercenary infantry was a well-structured mass phenomenon which was in harmony with the general European trend that would produce the *tercios* and the regimental structures destined to be the pieces in the bloody game of draughts played by the powers of the *ancièn régime* over the following centuries. The decision to focus on the Black Bands and on the period of almost two years after Giovanni's death during which these operated in Florentine service (December 1526-September 1528) turned out to be fruitful, and, as I had hoped, the 'orphans' of Giovanni de' Medici taken by themselves were to prove a fascinating subject and, at the same time, a highly effective instrument for research. Through the Bands, I could investigate, without intermediaries, the structure and internal dynamics of a body of pike-and-shot Italian mercenary infantry, and its interaction with its employers.

The choice to focus on the Bands, moreover, made it possible to observe through the eyes of some of its protagonists the political and military context of events of major importance. Above all, it allowed me to study the siege of Naples of 1528, one of the great sieges of the sixteenth century, and at the same time one of the less known and studied military events of that period. The siege of Naples has been largely overshadowed in Italian historiography by the more 'patriotic' siege of Florence of 1529-1530, long considered a much more important event simply because an Italian power (the Florentine republic) played in it the role of protagonist.

And, last but not least, to approach 'Giovanni of the Black Bands' by way of the Black Bands rather than Giovanni himself has led me to see 'Giovanni of the Black Bands' not as a name but as a title, in which the 'Black Bands' did not have a meaning, but a value.

[13] On the dimensions and origins of this veritable historiographical 'black hole', see G. Hanlon, *The Twilight of a Military Tradition: Italian Aristocrats and European Conflicts*, London, UCL Press, 1998, pp. 1-9 and P. Del Negro, *La storia militare dell'Italia moderna nello specchio della storiografia del Novecento*, in "Cheiron", XII (1995).

I. Warfare in the Time of Giovanni de' Medici

1. "The Blows of the Transalpine wars"

"O miseri noi che con verghogna andami
a nostre stanze così vituperosi
lassando dece milli de nostri alamani
ch'en sepeliti per li campi e fossi
de portare arme più non ne parlami..." [14].

Excerpt from the *Lamento de Svizari* –
author unknown, 1522

"Before they had felt the blows of the Transalpine wars, our Italian princes believed that a prince need only know how to dream up witty replies in his study; write a beautiful letter; display intelligence and readiness in his conversation and his speech; weave a fraud... give military positions as favours... Nor did these wretched men realize that they were preparing themselves to become the prey of anyone who assaulted them. This resulted in the great terrors, the sudden flights, and the miraculous losses of 1494; thus, three very powerful states of Italy were sacked and despoiled many times". These were the words that Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), in his dialogue *The Art of War* (1521) put into the mouth of the great Italian *condottiere*, Fabrizio Colonna (c. 1460-1520). Of course in fact these were Machiavelli's ideas, rather than Colonna's.

Though more recent and thorough studies have shown the inconsistency of this and other rhetorical exaggerations and expedients that Machiavelli used in his works to prove his points, the image of a divided country, whose litigious and selfish leaders had 'gone soft' in splendid isolation, unaware of the radical changes in the art of war that had taken place north of the Alps that were about to sweep them away, still holds considerable appeal.

This shows the enduring influence, even today, of the historiographical categories created by Risorgimento intellectuals and continued by many of their heirs. According to this view, the Italian Wars (1494-1559) were the turning point that evidenced the fatal weakness of what was seen as a divided country, rather than a complex political space where strong powers interacted and pursued their own state-building and military strategies. Thus it appeared that by failing to create a peninsular nation-state the Italian ruling elites and

[14] "O, poor us, who march in shame, / thus disgraced, back to our quarters, / leaving ten thousand of our Alemannians / buried in fields and ditches. / We'll never talk again of taking up arms..." *Historia della rotta de Francesi et Svizeri novamente fatta a Milano a la Bicocca con la presa de Lodi et lamento de Monsignor Lutrech et de Svizari*, in Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence - E.6.5.3, cass. II, n. 32.

Figure 2
Italy in 1527.

their armies had missed their appointment with history. According to this anachronistic view, military backwardness and political division opened the door to 'foreign' conquest. The idea that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries constituted a period of 'preponderanza straniera' [foreign preponderance] has been one of the unquestioned foundations of the Italian national narrative until very recent times.

Even today Renaissance Italy (Figure 2) is widely considered to be similar to the proverbial

terracotta vase among bronze vessels – that is, the predestined victim of the inexorable rise of the great national monarchies. This view depends on the equally anachronistic idea of the degree of consolidation achieved by France and Spain in the sixteenth century. In reality, the Italian peninsula was only one of the possible scenarios for the (inevitable) contest for hegemony among various European powers which had reached a critical moment in their growth.

Moreover, its perspective 'invaders' considered Italy a target of primary strategic importance to be fought for, not a piece of fruit ripe for plucking; they could not dismiss the military might of the Italian states as outdated or inherently inferior to their own. Even after the oft-quoted Peace of Lodi (1454), Italy had been far from peaceful, and many wars were fought between Italian *principi* that required them to do something more than write witty letters, organize artful deceptions or grant military positions as favours if they wished to remain masters of their *stati*. Moreover, though the prosecution of other wars beyond the Alps well into the second half of the fifteenth century granted Italian states a period of relative quiet from direct 'external' interference, militarily speaking the peninsula had not been an idyllic *hortus conclusus* [enclosed garden] – to use another popular cliché. The Italian states had to face, and find effective answers to, a wide array of challenges that ranged from France to Eastern Europe, passing through the lands of the Swiss Confederation and the Empire, without omitting the maritime areas and the mounting Turkish threat that hung not only over Venice's land possessions in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean, but also over the Italian mainland (between 1480 and 1481 the coastal city of Otranto in the Kingdom of Naples was actually occupied by an Ottoman expeditionary force, and only the change of strategy following Mehmet II's death had prevented the Turks from continuing to press on that front). Besides, Italian troops were far from being an unknown feature on fifteenth-century European battlefields. In fact, the system of Italian powers could count on a military complex that was both versatile and adapted to their needs [15]. The Italian *condottieri* were decidedly avant-garde in several 'innovative' fields, such as artillery, light cavalry, the use of both permanent and field fortifications, while they were also up to the challenge even in most traditional areas, such as that of heavy cavalry.

The form that the "blows of the Transalpine wars" took in the eyes of the Italian observer of that period was explained very well by another great Florentine, Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540). In a frequently quoted passage of his *Storia d'Italia* (especially in this regard), Guicciardini argued that after 1494 the type of warfare practiced in the peninsula had been completely overturned by the "furore delle artiglierie" [fury of the artillery] in siege warfare and by the impact of the "altro modo" [different way] in which footsoldiers fought in the open field [16]. Like Machiavelli, Guicciardini needed to create an adequate background for his arguments, and hence needed to highlight a clean break between the periods before and after the fateful *passaggio* [passage] of Charles VIII to Italy. If here we leave aside all analy-

[15] M.E. Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy*, London, Bodley Head, 1974; M.E. Mallett, *Mercenaries*, in *Medieval Warfare: a History*, edited by M. Keen, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999; M.N. Covini, *Political and Military Bonds in the Italian State System, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, in *War and Competition between States*, edited by P. Contamine, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 9-36.

[16] F. Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, edited by S. Seidel Menchi, Turin, Einaudi, 1971, vol. III, pp. 1535-1536.

sis of the role played by the artillery, we must say that as far as infantry is concerned, the break was less clean than the two Florentine rhetoricians would have us believe, and at the same time much broader. The "different way" in which the infantry fought was new not only for the Italians. It was part of a shift of 'Copernican' proportions which, after the century-long predominance of the cavalry forces, was progressively making the infantry the centre of gravity of the military universe. And Renaissance Italy was not the first victim of the dawning of the 'new sun'.

In fact, the most immediate effects of such a momentous shift were enough to take the confrontation to levels that were incompatible with the capability of the contemporary Italian military systems, but it would be interesting to know whether other systems would have reacted better if the flood of armies had taken a direction different from that traced by Charles VIII through the Alps and towards Italy. Indeed, using outdated parameters, most masters of Italian states miscalculated both the capability of France, Spain and the Empire to maintain a prolonged military presence in Italy and the impact that this presence would have. At the same time, however, it would be wrong to think that the so-called 'invaders' had a much better understanding of how outdated those parameters were, and a clearer vision of how much the evolution and the requirements of the instruments chosen to fight a conflict so far from their homes were to change them. All the contenders appeared on the Italian scene with different combinations of instruments and tactics: some 'new' (sometimes used in traditional ways) and others 'old' (often used in new ways). The peninsula became a bloody laboratory of experimentation. In fact, throughout the first twenty years of the Italian Wars the powers involved all ended up struggling to learn the extent of the offensive and defensive capabilities of their new tools and coping with their administrative and strategic implications (mostly by an empirical process of trial and error, passing with disturbing ease from victory to defeat and vice versa).

In the course of the fifteenth century the possible uses and the versatility of the infantry had multiplied throughout western Europe, and its presence in the armies of those who would be the contenders in the Italian Wars had grown more or less constantly. Even in Italy, where the tactical and administrative requirements typical of large numbers of mounted troops, and in particular of heavy cavalrymen, still shaped the world of the *condottieri*, the infantry forces made up almost fifty percent of the armies by the end of the century. However, in almost none of the countries involved in the Italian Wars could the infantry offer a shock force in open field comparable to that of the cavalry.

A partial exception was the Helvetic Confederation which, since its origins, was obliged to base its military might almost entirely on an infantry which had necessarily evolved very differently from that of all its neighbours. The Swiss Cantons owed their independence to the capability of quickly mobilizing large numbers of warlike conscript infantrymen, equipped with halberds and trained to fight in close formation, and to their ability to resist (and even attack) the feudal heavy cavalry of their rich and powerful neighbours. During the Middle Ages, in both victories and defeats the Swiss infantry had already shown its dangerousness, if not its superiority. During the first half of the fifteenth century, however, and in particular after their defeat at Arbedo (1422) at the hands of the Milanese forces, the Swiss progressively replaced the main weapon of their infantry, the halberd (a multipurpose polearm about two meters long with an axe blade, a long spike and a backspike on top), with the much longer pike, which, being almost six meters long and useful only for

thrusting, was basically a very long spear of very limited usefulness as an individual weapon. The shift from bodies of densely arrayed halberdiers to formations made up mostly of pikemen in which three or more ranks could extend their weapons to the enemy ended up by emphasising the defensive and offensive characteristics of the traditional formations of the Swiss, much increasing their impact in the field. These developments, combined with a marked demographic increase and a series of internal transformation in Swiss society (in particular the progressive shift of the Swiss rural economy from intensive farming to cattle-breeding) which resulted in a significant reduction in the demand for manual labour during long periods of the year, placed an extraordinary instrument at the disposal either of the Confederation's aggressive foreign policy or of anyone who could afford to influence it, or at least be granted the authorization of the Cantons to exploit their recruiting grounds (at that time the Swiss already had a well-established tradition of mercenary service).

No one, at the time of the Burgundian Wars (1476-1477), would have defined as 'outdated' or inefficient the military organization to which Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, had entrusted the fate of the aggressive foreign policy that led him in 1476 to a collision with the interests of the Helvetic Confederation. However, three consecutive major defeats – Grandson (1476), Morat (1476) and Nancy (1477) – at the hands of the Swiss, and the death of Duke Charles himself at Nancy, put an abrupt and spectacular end to the existence of the duchy of Burgundy as an autonomous power at a point in which it had seemed in full expansion. The dynamics of those defeats showed to the 'public' that the combination of overwhelming offensive force and great defensive potential offered by the packed formations of the Swiss heavy infantry could effectively replace the driving power of lances carried by squadrons of heavy cavalry. However, they also showed how vulnerable state-of-the-art 'medieval' armies as a whole could be to this tactic – armies which around their knights in full armour had created a versatile and generally very effective ensemble made up of light cavalry, artillery and large numbers of traditionally equipped and trained infantrymen.

Over the centuries, pikes had been used defensively en masse with some success in various parts of Europe, from Italy to Scotland. The Swiss, however, managed to maintain the mobility of their 'hedgehogs', turning them into fearsome offensive weapons capable of sudden and devastating advances without losing compactness. Thousands of Swiss *montani bestiales* [bestial mountaineers], amassed in huge square-shaped formations and marching to the beat of their famous drums could create a steel wall composed of several 'layers' of steel heads which was almost impenetrable (at least on level ground) to the attacks of heavy cavalry and to the action of the other traditional types of European infantry – with the possible exception of the English infantry of longbowmen. Eventually, the Swiss tactical organization became the prime model and standard for the performance of the new 'national' heavy infantries that all the powers involved in the European wars of supremacy (of which the Italian Wars were just a first phase) forced themselves to organize – in different times and with different outcomes.

The memory of the tactical bewilderment caused by the dense columns of Swiss that followed Charles VIII in 1494 bristling with pikes "et spadoni, et labarde quivi tramezate che parevano per la novità della cosa horribili, et spaventose alla vista di ciascheduno" [and with two-handed swords and halberds among them which, because of their novelty,

appeared horrible and frightening to the sight of all] [17] was still alive almost a century after the beginning of the Italian Wars. In Italy the pike was given the status of *regina dell'arme* [queen of arms] remarkably early, and a substantial reconversion of the Italian infantry began very soon. However, in the short term this did not lead to the development of bodies of troops capable of competing with the Swiss and German *oltramontani* masters of the pike on their own terms. In fact, between 1494 and 1515, with few exceptions, the newborn Italian heavy infantry performed rather poorly and suffered repeated defeats.

Pike fighting was not unknown in the peninsula, but the traditional Italian infantry was light, highly mobile, designed to guard or assault cities and field fortifications, and to fight in open order on difficult terrain unfavourable to mounted troops. Italian infantrymen were usually equipped with either sword and buckler (or short pole arms like partisans and spears) or with missile weapons such as crossbows and *scoppietti* [handguns] [18]. The shift from the open to the close order was made particularly difficult by quantitative and qualitative factors. In its early and relatively rudimentary form, the numerical and moral requirements of the new format of tactical infantry were particularly high, be it for the sheer size of the formations considered best (squares composed of more than 5,000 men were not an unusual spectacle), for the fact that such formations relied almost entirely on their shock-force and necessarily had to fight in a collectively very aggressive way, and because in the first twenty years of the Italian Wars pitched battles were fairly frequent. The various Italian states drew from a pool of manpower that was fragmented and unstable, and frequently 'polarized' by the presence of two or more foreign armies campaigning in the peninsula. Even though his were probably pessimistic estimates, according to Francesco Maria I della Rovere (1490-1538), one of the most highly esteemed Italian soldiers of his day, it was impossible to recruit in Italy more than 10,000 professional "buoni fanti" [good infantrymen] at any given time [19].

Thanks to the widespread tendency to search the history of the Classical world for confirmation of any important contemporary phenomenon, an analogy was established between the formations of pikemen *alla moderna* [in the modern way] and the Macedonian phalanx. Although such a link was more of an ideal than anything else and the types of formation and equipment used differed considerably, both indeed followed the same implacable mechanics. Whether they found themselves resisting cavalry charges or clashing with formations of pikemen (thereby initiating the bloody 'push of pike' – Figure 3), the ranks and the files of the close order united the destiny of the people who composed them. It was an all-or-nothing affair: if close order was maintained, they all would win and pay a relatively small price, but if the formation collapsed, most of them would be cut down by the enemy. Obviously enough, pike fighting required a very specific and taxing type of training: one that could only be effectively exploited by homogeneous ensembles of troops already united by a sense of cohesion – a cohesion that found in battle its proof of worth, not its ori-

[17] Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, *Il Brancatio della vera disciplina et arte militare, sopra i Comentari di Giulio Cesare, da lui ridotti in Compendio per commodità de'soldati*, Venice, Appresso Vittorio Baldini, 1582, p. 6.

[18] Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters*, cit., pp. 153-159; Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, cit., pp. 272-275; on the different developments of the various European 'national' infantries during the late Middle Ages, see P. Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984, pp. 132-137.

[19] Francesco Maria I della Rovere, *Discorsi militari dell'eccellentissimo signore Francesco Maria I della Rovere duca d'Urbino*, Ferrara, Appresso Dominico Mammarelli, 1583, p. 3.

Figure 3
Hans Holbein the Younger, *Infantry Battle*, c. 1530 (Albertina, Wien).
Especially in its early forms, the 'push of pike' was a rare show of organized savagery practiced en masse. When two squares 'collided', the pikemen viciously prodded and thrust with their long weapons trying to open gaps in the opposing formation, creating a murderous tangle of vibrating pike staves jutting back and forth in a wild rhythm, bashing against each other, while their iron tips searched for a path through the guard and the armour of their targets. As this happened, soldiers brandishing and all sorts of *arme corte* (two-handed swords, halberds, swords and bucklers...) took advantage of every opening to try to push their way through the 'layers' of the wall of pike-heads to reach those who were brandishing them. Those in the rear ranks of the two pike-squares who were unable to use their own arms literally pushed their comrades ahead for support and momentum and stepped in their place as these fell. If the combat continued and neither of the two parts yielded, the pressure mounted; shafts often broke, or were cut, or left to fall because they were unusable. The border between the two formations became less and less defined, with groups of men fiercely fighting with anything available in a mayhem of pike staves, stepping on the bodies of the dead and wounded.
As a Landsknecht ballad about the battle of Pavia recounts, "in blood we had to go, in blood we had to go, up to, up to the tops of our shoes. Merciful God, look at the misery!" .

gin, and whose need increased more than proportionately with the growth in size of the square one wished to array.
The reconversion of the Italian infantry ran aground in this phase because of the difficulty of finding an efficient and suitable way to make the closed order compatible with groups that were numerically significant as well as homogeneous, whether they came from within civil society or from outside it. In Italy the introduction of a mechanism similar to that of the Swiss, which permitted a large number of good infantrymen to be gathered from a relatively small population like that of the Helvetic Confederation, was impossible. The Italian socio-economic structure was too different from that of the areas where the new tactic of pike-fighting was first practiced successfully *en masse*, and the Italian powers could not count on a successful incorporation of the new tactics throughout large portions of

their social fabric (as in the Swiss case) to get the people needed to fill up their squares of pikemen. Much to the chagrin of Machiavelli, who had dreamed of reviving the legions of farmers/citizens of republican Rome, the cohesiveness of certain Italian social groups could not be effectively transplanted into 'modern' military units.

Moreover, the method of separating potential professional soldiers from civil society and integrating them into the artificial social order of mercenary infantry presented certain insurmountable limits during this phase. In typology and origin the Italian infantrymen were closer to the main rivals and successful competitors of the Swiss, the Landsknechts: that is, the soldiers from the Rhine Basin, Alsace, Wurttemberg, Vorarlberg and Austrian Tyrol who fought using Swiss tactics. However, in Italy there was no 'mass' military movement like that of the so-called 'order' of the Landsknechts that the Italian military entrepreneurs (unlike their German colleagues) [20] could exploit as a common matrix to create the required esprit de corps among large enough numbers of potential professional soldiers. In the end, there was no way to fill the gap between the high-level – but small – organic units of heavy infantry that some Italian *condottieri* could place in the field already at the end of the fifteenth century, and the huge masses of pikemen that in theory would have been needed.

Those Italian powers that, during the Wars, were able (or had) to overcome their well-established (and sometimes well-founded) aversion to arming their subjects, found themselves obliged – when it came to pitched battles – to mix professional soldiers and conscript militiamen of varying quality; in some cases they actually had to resort to formations composed entirely of the latter. The choice of relying heavily on Italian troops was generally a dangerous gamble imposed by political and strategic isolation, as demonstrated by the catastrophic collapse of the heterogeneous squares of Venetian infantry at La Motta [21] (1513) and the behaviour of the Florentine militiamen, slaughtered like cattle at Prato (1512). Other interesting experiments in creating good heavy infantry, such as the promising one of Cesare Borgia (1475-1507), the infamous *Valentino*, during his brief period in power as master of Romagna (traditionally the best recruiting grounds of Italian infantry) were interrupted not by military defeats but by the political instability of the peninsula.

All in all, it has to be said that the failed development of an Italian tactical infantry of pikemen was more of a failure for Risorgimento historians than for the people of the period. To have the instruments that would permit them to play an independent role, the Italian powers would have had to pay prices – socially, politically and financially – that already immediately after the beginning of the Italian Wars were not only beyond the means of most of them, but also (and perhaps above all) beyond their actual needs. In the absence of a 'grand strategy', it was inconvenient to keep blocked, without any guarantee of good performance, large numbers of soldiers in large and expensive bodies of heavy infantry that had little or no other use outside pitched battles – unlike the more versatile light infantry. Large parts of the Italian governing elites found it practical and convenient

[20] On the different origins of the Confederate and Landsknecht troops: F. Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser and his Work Force, a Study in European Economic and Social History*, Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1964-65, vol. I, pp. 14-18; R. Baumann, *I Lanzichenecchi: la loro storia e cultura dal tardo Medioevo alla guerra dei Trent'anni*, Turin, Einaudi, 1996, pp. 3-48.

[21] Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, cit., pp. 505-511.

to entrust the protection of their own privileges and *libertà* [liberties] to the military might of the great European powers, support their strategy and 'complete' their armies with Italian troops.

Ironically, the necessary framework for the birth of the 'modern' Italian infantry was provided by the rise and consolidation of the presence and influence of the great foreign powers in the peninsula. The fact that Italian squadrons and troops were assigned supportive roles from 1515 onwards finally made it possible to start the process of 'sedimenting' the tactical know-how and experience needed to generate proper structures, without the risk of continually frittering away in battle the little that had been created. This brought the required effort to a level that was compatible with the real organizational capacity of the new Italian military entrepreneurship. It was no accident that the same sort of people who had failed miserably as militiamen in Machiavelli's *Ordinanza* were to become highly successful soldiers in Giovanni de' Medici's mercenary *bande*.

Nevertheless, to bring this about, and for the Italian infantry to finally begin to make an impact, the very nature of the new infantry had first to evolve into a less aggressive, more rational and, in a manner of speaking, architectonic form. The traditional, massive and still somewhat 'rough' formations of pikemen of the Swiss model had to be remodelled into more rigid and complex formations. Assembling squadrons of infantry had to become more of a science and less of a craft. This transformation was made possible primarily by the spread of small firearms and their inclusion in the economy of the squadrons of pikemen. The real construction of the Italian tactical infantry would start from its good *archibugieria* [arquebusry] (that is, its shot component) and not from its pikemen, as Machiavelli hoped. In a manner of speaking the Italians began to construct their squadrons from the outside.

In comparison to the striking progress of the pike, the deployment of small gunpowder weapons on early modern European battlefields followed a far more discontinuous path [22]. Thanks to progress in metalworking and in corning black powder, a first generation of hand-held weapons, radically differing from small-size pieces of ordnance, was created in the early fifteenth century. By the middle of the century, large numbers of *scoppiettieri* [handgunners] had become an important feature of European warfare. A further step forward came in the second half of the fifteenth century, with the spread of the matchlock arquebus, in which the lighted extremity of a slow-burning cord soaked in saltpetre was applied to the primer by a trigger and not by hand (as with the *scoppietto*), allowing the shooter to fire with both hands on the gun (Figure 4). By the 1520s the matchlock arquebus had become by far the most common type of portable gunpowder weapon.

Thanks to the presence of bodies of heavy infantry – which were relatively impervious to the traditional shock attacks of the mounted troops and could offer protection from cavalry charges to crossbowmen and handgunners as these slowly reloaded their weapons – large numbers of shooters could be deployed even in the open field. The growing need to coordinate the action of these two types of troops triggered a veritable tactical chain reaction and established a veritable symbiosis between the two components in which the firearms progressively gained space and importance. A considerable boost in this direction was

[22] On this topic, see B. Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Figure 4
Melchior Feselen, *The Siege of Alesia* (detail), 1533 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich).
German arquebusiers portrayed firing or reloading their weapons while they act in support of a formation of pikemen engaged in the 'push of pike'.

given by the fact that German, Spanish and Italian infantries, in comparison with the Swiss, were forced to make up with firepower for what they lacked in sheer shock-force. The laborious effort to combine the action of the arquebusiers (concentrating their firepower and disciplining its release) with that of the pikemen made the 'new' infantry squadrons more complex and more difficult to organize and handle, but it also made them more flexible, and even ended up by slowly giving them the edge over the less refined formation of the Swiss, who initially sought instead to preserve the original mobility and overwhelming force of their columns.
To explain how dangerous the combined action of pike and shot could be, reference is often made to the outcome of the battle of Bicocca [23] (1522) – the first great pitched battle during the phase of the Italian Wars that began in 1521. Bicocca is also identified with the beginning of the Swiss decline. Because of the way it came about and was fought, and because of its size, it expressly marks the end of a period. In what was reminiscent of seasonal migrations towards European battlefields, the best Swiss troops (those recruited 'wholesale' with the permission of the Cantons) preferred to participate in brief and incisive campaigns that culminated in pitched battles, permitting them to return to their homes with money and booty. As the Imperial commander Prospero Colonna (1460-1523) put into practice with remarkable success a dilatory strategy, the commanders of the Swiss troops in French service, 16,000 footsoldiers that formed the backbone of the French army, obliged their French Captain General Odet de Foix (1485-1528), who could not pay them ("point d'argent, point de Suisses" [no money, no Swiss], as the saying went), to choose between letting them all go back to their valleys or taking the initiative at last. This meant

[23] Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, cit., pp. 538-46.

allowing them to fight a pitched battle using their traditional, well-tested, frontal tactic (based on a swift and well-timed advance of large squares of pikemen), even though the terrain had been chosen and prepared by the enemy. It was thus that on 27 April 1522 the Swiss hurled two massive squares, each more than 7,000 men strong, against the centre of the Imperial battle array, where they were welcomed by a lethal combination of artillery fire, volley after volley of Spanish 'arquebusry', earthworks and, finally, the wall of pikes of their bitter rivals, the Landsknechts, who in the end obliged them to draw back after suffering frightful losses. The disastrous outcome of this battle forced the French to abandon Lombardy and compromised the entire campaign for the reconquest of Milan.

Rather than to a supposed collapse of morale and reputation after their defeat (no matter how serious), the subsequent 're-dimensioning' of the role of the Swiss was due to an overall tactical and strategic change. For already before Bicocca a tactical posture that had strongly characterised the first phase of the Italian Wars – in which the offensive mode substantially prevailed over the defensive (and from which the French, who more frequently employed the best heavy cavalry and heavy infantry, had particularly benefited) – had reached its limit. A long process of technical and tactical refinement – which emphasised the integration of various arms and coordination among the various components of an army, often combined with the use of field fortifications – eventually led to a new tactical equilibrium which made battles increasingly dangerous and, at the same time, less decisive. This situation was primarily advantageous for the Habsburg/Imperial forces, which contributed more to its development.

Although this change followed a long and discontinuous path, it is not altogether wrong to accept the 'official dating' (legitimized, if for no other reason, by its popularity) of Guicciardini, who wrote that while "insino al '21, perduta la campagna era perduto lo stato" [up to 1521, the campaign being lost, thus was the state also] [24], afterwards war assumed a new character. Contendents tried to "allungare la guerra" [prolong war] and fought "senza tentar giornate... più con la industria con l'arti con la elettione provvida de' vantaggi" [without trying to fight pitched battles... more with cunning, skill and the perspicacious choosing of advantages] than with weapons [25]. Having to shield Giovanni de' Medici from the accusation of not having fought in many battles, even Giovangirolamo de' Rossi argued that by the time his half-uncle had began his brief career as commander (in 1521) the age of great battles was over. War had turned into a series of exhausting manoeuvres, skirmishes, ambushes and escalades and no one really wanted to fight a *giornata* "se non con grandissimo vantaggio" [except with the greatest advantage] [26].

This was the type of warfare that Giovanni de' Medici and his men practised and it was in this type of warfare that they established their fame.

[24] F. Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, in *Opere*, edited by E. Scarano, Turin, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1970, vol. I, p. 746.

[25] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., p. 1536.

[26] Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, cit., pp. 110-13.

2. The New Italian Infantry

"Però ti avertisco, che havendo a manegiare fantaria è necessario che la patientia habbia a giovare, et li errori che tu conoscerai li remedierai, et non li farai conoscere ad altri. Perché se tu li facessi conoscere con collera nel mettere l'ordinanza, o vero battaglia, non sarìa senza vergogna tua, et della Arte, perché in quel tempo di mettere la battaglia importa la vita, et l'honore" [27].

Giovambattista Gotti, former sergeant-major of the Black Bands

"Le Bande Nere, che feciono male assai, erano avvezze sotto el signor Giovanni che dava loro molta licenza, e morto lui augumentorno, perché stettono molti mesi senza capi o con capi a loro modo... anzi volendo dar loro un capo, non lo vollono accettare e feciono certa unione insieme" [The Black Bands, who caused a great deal of damage, were accustomed to being under the command of *signor* Giovanni, who accorded them great rein. Upon his death they became even more unruly because they had been for months without leaders or with leaders of their own choice... on the contrary, when we attempted to give them a leader, they refused to accept him and established jointly a sort of *unione*]. Thus lamented the former papal lieutenant Francesco Guicciardini, who, in the passionate *Oratio Defensoria* [28] which he wrote in the attempt to clear himself of the accusations heaped on him after the disastrous conclusion of the 1526-27 campaign, tried to lay quite a substantial part of the blame on the 'insubordinate' captains of the late Giovanni de' Medici and on their *unione*.

It is not surprising that what could be considered the first 'official' mention of the *unione* of captains that gave origin to the Black Bands was a lament. Even if he had been able to identify the *unione* and the decision of Giovanni's 'orphans' not to disband as a sign of the tactical and administrative progress made by the Italian infantry, thereby distinguishing it from the countless acts of indiscipline committed by the unruly troops placed under his responsibility, the dignified Florentine patrician would still have disapproved. The main problem, first for Guicciardini, and then also (as we shall see) for the leaders of the Florentine Republic, his political opponents, was the lack of discipline of the Black Bands. However, by lack of discipline they were referring not so much to the lack of discipline of the Bands' soldiers – for their discipline was indeed quite strict. The militarily backward Florentine republican leadership believed all manifestations of what we would call 'esprit de corps' to be a form of indiscipline. However, whether the Florentines understood it or not, the arrival at such a degree of 'indiscipline' had been a long and tortuous process.

[27] "But I warn you that managing an infantry requires patience, and the errors that you recognize you will remedy, and you will not disclose them to others. Were you to divulge them in anger as you order the troops, that is the squadron, it would not be without shame on you and the Art, because in the hour of arranging the squadron you risk your life and honour...". *Libro di Ricordi intorno all'arte militare dati da un suo sergente a Guidubaldo II della Rovere*, Library of the University of Urbino, Fondo del Comune, vol. 101 – foliation is absent.

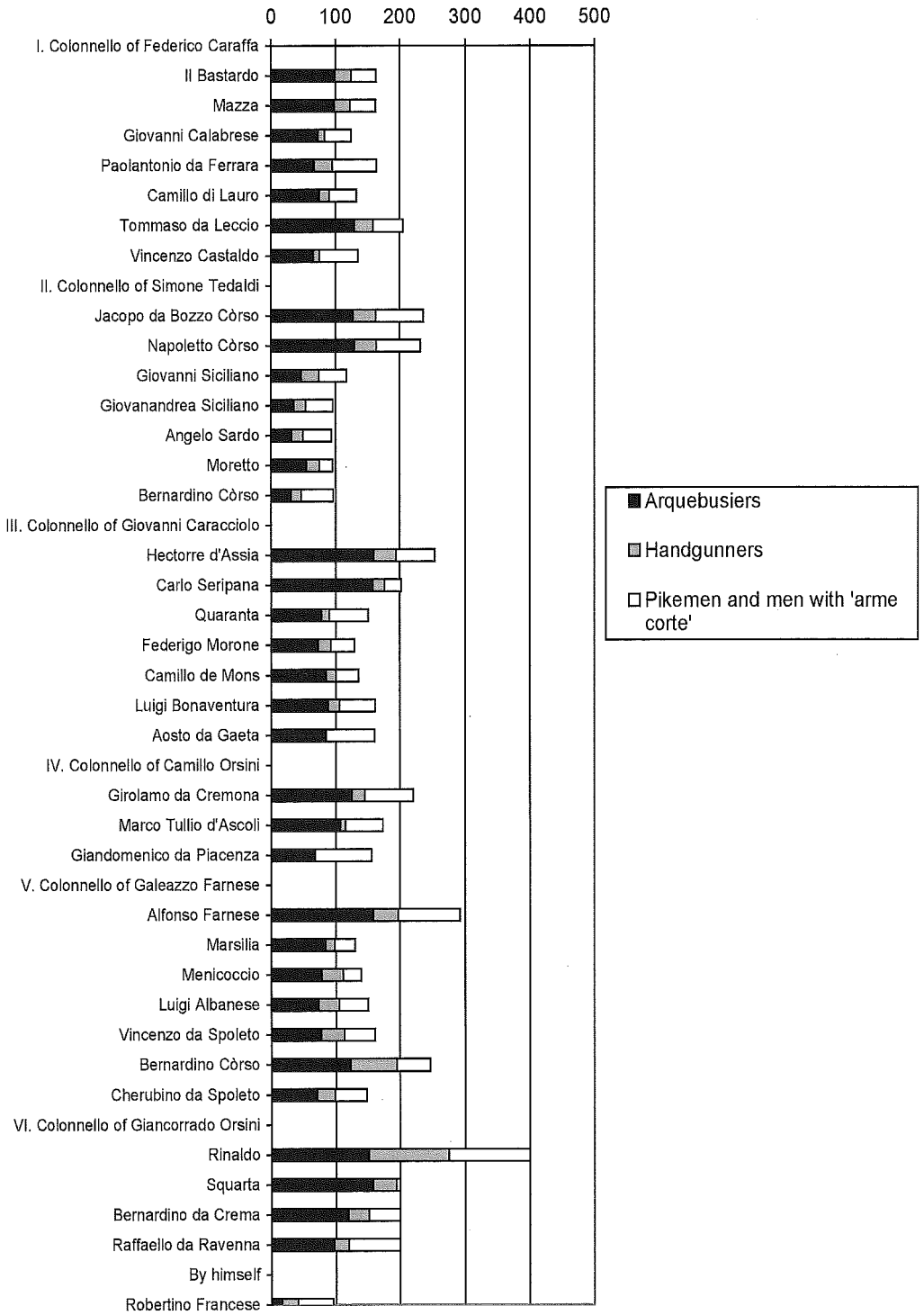
[28] F. Guicciardini, *Oratio defensoria*, in *Opere*, cit., pp. 599-602.

In the fifteenth century the Italian infantry was structured into companies of varying sizes which could reach up to five hundred infantrymen, placed under the command of a captain. Even though they could act in concert, combining in a decidedly efficient way the fire of the crossbowmen and *scoppiettieri* with the aggressive action of the shield-and-buckler infantrymen, such companies were not structured, equipped or trained expressly to merge into larger, 'closed' formations, as were instead those of the sixteenth century.
With the coming of pike fighting, interdependence between companies became much stricter, and the necessity to handle infantry in a more 'exact' way and for prolonged periods led to the creation of a series of intermediary structures between the individual company and the infantry as a whole. A first step was the establishment of groups made up of several companies which were called (in Italian) *colonnelli*. The word *colonnello* indicated both the unit and its commander, and to simplify things I will henceforth use the English word colonel when referring to the commander, the Italian word when referring to the unit. Initially, an infantry colonel was generally given command over a certain number of already existing companies. The real turning point in the formation of bodies of 'modern' Italian infantry came during the 1520s, when infantry captains became sub-contractors of their colonel. In practice, the colonel first stipulated the *condotta* and then sent his own agents, his captains, to raise companies that were sub-units of his *colonnello* right from the start. There was no standard size for a *colonnello*. The organization chart (Graph 1) of the units of the six Italian colonels under the command of Renzo da Ceri in Apulia gives a good example of how variable the composition and size of an Italian *colonnello* could be.
However, the *colonnello* was just an intermediate product on the route that would eventually lead to the birth of a type of administrative and tactical unit destined to be the constituent part of European armies for more than two centuries: i.e. the regiment [29]. The size and composition of the first regiments were the result of a compromise aimed at satisfying the technical and tactical requirements of pike-and-shot tactics within the limited size of an expeditionary force that was also expected to operate autonomously at a distance from the fatherland. The most illustrious results of this process were the early Spanish *tercios de Italia*, which originated from groups of three pre-existing *coronelias* (*colonnelli* in Spanish), each made up of four to five companies; these groups probably already operated together on a more or less regular basis before the famous *tercios viejos* (the *tercios* of Lombardy, Naples, Sicily and Milan) themselves were officially created between 1534 and 1538 [30]. The Italian powers did not need to organize permanent expeditionary forces, and the first real Italian regiments and *tercios* (the difference between the two units was more administrative than tactical [31]) were formed after the end of the Italian Wars, above all to respond

[29] The Italian word *reggimento* comes from the German term *Regiment*, which indicated initially any ensemble of infantry companies led by an *Oberst* [colonel].

[30] Though their origins remain nebulous, the first *tercios* emerged quite early as organic ensembles of about three thousand soldiers divided (in theory) into ten to twelve companies of 250-300 men each. On the origins of the tercios: J.A. de La Cuesta, *De Pavia a Rocroi: los Tercios de infanteria española en los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid, Balkan Ediciones, 1999; R. Quatrefages, *Los Tercios Españoles 1567-77*, Madrid, Fundación Universitaria Española, 1979; J. de Sotto y Montes, *Los grandes Tercios Viejos de la infanteria española*, in "Revista de Historia Militar", XI (1962), pp. 25-62.

[31] A regiment was the private property of its commander, who had full authority over the appointment of the captains and of the other regimental officers, whereas in the case of the tercios this power was, at least in theory, in the hands



Graph 1. Troops of the League of Cognac in Apulia (December 1528).

to the strategic necessities of the Habsburg military system. The Black Bands – which, at the time they entered Florentine service, counted on about 3,300 soldiers divided among 12 companies [32] – were one of the first examples of an Italian proto-regimental unit. However, they were, in fact, a sort of 'false dawn', the product of a unique and fascinating 'short cut' along the road that would lead to the constitution of regiments.

Dying at the peak of his intense career as a field commander, Giovanni had left behind something almost unique among the Italian troops of the period: a group of captains of proven valour who had served a long time together under the same commander, a man who possessed great skill, charisma and means. Much to the dismay of Guicciardini, it was a group that functioned even after the death of its creator. The 'lesser demons' established their *unione* both to honour the memory of the 'Great Devil' Giovanni and to serve their own interests, because as part of a larger administrative and tactical ensemble their companies were worth much more than they were singly. That of the 'orphans' of Giovanni was the first case of Italian infantry troops of the pike-and-shot era to form an ensemble that was cohesive, qualitatively significant and large enough to maintain control over its own organization and destiny. This was no small feat for an Italian infantry unit which, like all of those of its *natione* [nation], did not base its reputation on what were considered the 'strong points' of the infantry of that period. It was a sign of the growing importance of skirmish warfare in that phase. Indeed the Italian infantry 'complemented' the other infantries, rather than being a mere 'accessory' (as has often been argued).

At that stage none of the 'national' infantries that had fought in the Italian Wars could be considered 'complete'. In 1532 Francesco Maria I della Rovere, in his capacity as captain general of the Venetian forces, pronounced before his masters in Venice a series of *discorsi* [33] that summarized what could be considered the Italian military common sense of the time. According to the duke of Urbino, the Swiss and Germans on one side, and the Spaniards and Italians on the other, occupied two different tactical niches. As far as infantry was concerned, the duke considered any good Italian footsoldier equal to any good Spanish one, but added that that neither *natione* could do anything decisive without the firmness and shock force of Landsknecht or Swiss troops. With ten thousand Italians, ten thousand Spaniards and a "grossa banda" [large body] of Germans, the duke believed he could defeat even the fearsome Turkish army in a pitched battle [34]. The opinion of Francesco Maria I was shared by many of his contemporaries. At this stage Swiss and Landsknechts were still masters in the use of the pike; Italian and Spanish troops ranked second, but were first when it came to skirmishing.

of the captain general of the army as representative of the Most Catholic King of Spain. Cf. L. Brancaccio, *I carichi militari*, Antwerp, Appresso Joachimo Trognesio, 1610, p. 100.

[32] Francesco Guicciardini to the Eight, 16 May 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 22r and Otto di Balia, Responsive, 50, f. 34r.

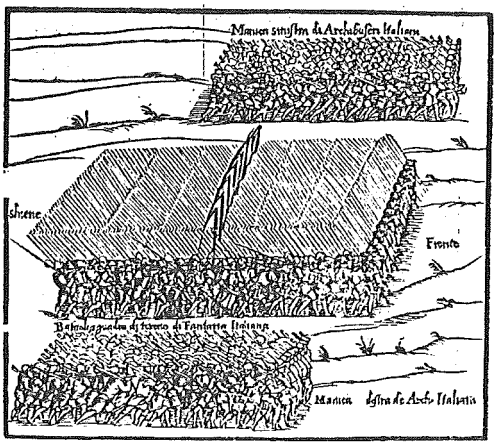
[33] Echoing the unfair and biased judgement passed on him by Papal Lieutenant Francesco Guicciardini, Italian historians have accused Francesco Maria I della Rovere of pretty much everything from mere cowardice and incompetence to outright treason for his alleged role in the sequence of events that led to the Sack of Rome and the collapse of the last real effort to free Italy from 'enslavement'. In fact, the duke of Urbino was a reliable and talented military professional, and his *Discorsi militari* – a rather incoherent series of official reports written by the duke and anecdotes of his 'professional' life collected long after his death – make surprisingly interesting reading.

[34] Rovere, *Discorsi militari*, cit., pp. 2r-3v.

And yet, the fact that the Italian infantrymen of this period were better suited to fighting in open order does not mean that the closed order was foreign to their tactics. That Giovanni de' Medici had not created a unit composed simply of skirmishers was clear from the central role played by the Sicilian Sergeant-Major Giovambattista Gotti from Messina [35] (?-1559) within the Black Bands, and from the efforts made by Florence and its allies to retain his services. By the time of the birth of the Black Bands, the command structure of the Italian infantry company had adapted itself to the demands of the pike-and-shot tactic, and did not substantially differ from that of the other nations. The officers of a company included the captain, lieutenant, ensign, sergeant, and several *capi di squadra* [corporals] (one for each *squadra* [squad] of infantrymen – about 25 soldiers). However, the real embodiment of all the changes generated by the birth of large bodies of pike-and-shot tactical infantry were the ranks of sergeant and (even more) sergeant-major. The prestige achieved by these technical and organizational experts is mirrored by the attention devoted to their multiple duties in the rich harvest of military treatises written in the second half of the sixteenth century. A company sergeant was in charge of drilling the troops, as well as their deployment during marches and in combat. He had to possess the ability to process quickly (mentally or with very limited aid from written tables) all the data regarding the force under his command and to overcome the problems inherent in the complicated task of arraying variable numbers of footsoldiers of different specialities into coherent formations. The sergeant-major of a regiment, on the other hand, answered directly to the commander of his unit and did the same job as a sergeant, though on a much larger scale (Figures 5 and 6); he had to assemble a mass of data that was both much greater and more diversified and he had to oversee the merging of elements from the various companies making up the unit. So though Giovanni de' Medici, first, then other famous *condottieri* such as Orazio Baglioni and eventually Ugo de' Pepoli were actually in command of the Black Bands, it was their Sicilian sergeant-major who translated their orders into organized action every time. Through his voice and presence, through the positioning of the standard bearers' flags and through the beating of military drums, it was he who held the reins of a hierarchy that extended from himself down to the sergeants of the various companies and the *capi di squadra* [corporals]. Giovambattista Gotti was among the first successful Italian representatives of what, in the 1520s, was still a relatively new speciality. Nevertheless, army commanders with very different temperaments and backgrounds like the French general Lautrec and Francesco Maria I della Rovere held his services in high esteem, and his 'strike' at the beginning of the siege of Naples cost the Florentine troops dearly and caused a considerable upheaval in the upper spheres of the League of Cognac's army.

In spite of the fact that they had not had to withstand the test of a 'push of pike', the Black Bands formed their *battaglia* [squadron] in a combat situation at least twice during the Neapolitan campaign of 1528, and successfully at that, though in both cases they were

[35] In his career Giovambattista Gotti was sergente generale first of the troops of Giovanni de' Medici and the papal infantry forces, then of the *militia* of the last Florentine republic and, finally, of the *legione Feltria*, of which he eventually also became captain general. For more than twenty years he served the dukes of Urbino as sergeant-major, military engineer, inspector and advisor. He retired in 1553, and was made count of Novilara by the duke of Urbino. See C. Promis, *Biografie di ingegneri militari italiani dal secolo XIV alla metà del XVIII*, Turin, F.lli Brocca, 1874, pp. 189-193.



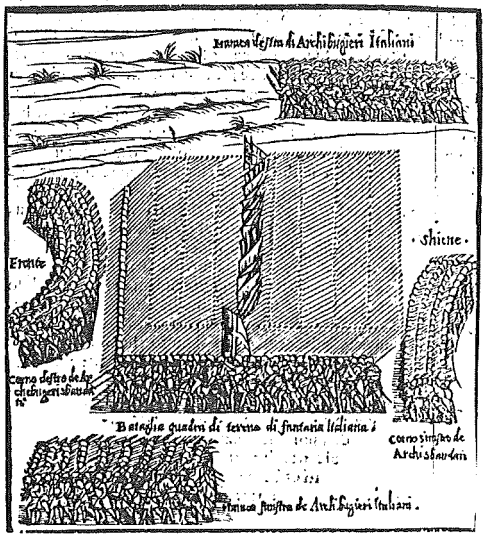


Figure 5 and 6
'Square of Ground' of Italian Infantry, from F. Ferretti, *Della osservanza militare del Capitan Francesco Ferretti d'Ancona,* Venice, 1572 (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence).
The drawings are not to scale.
The combination of a *quadro de terreno* [square of ground] of pikemen with two *maniche* [sleeves] of arquebusiers, seems to have been a formation favoured by the first generation of Italian sergeant-majors (like Giovambattista Gotti and Giovan Maria da Padova), who, with several variations, had already adopted it with relative success during the course of the first half of the sixteenth century. Unlike the *quadro de numero* [square of numbers], the *quadro de terreno* was a geometrically, but not numerically, perfect square of pikemen which permitted the concentration of most of the shock-force on the *fronte* [front] and on the *schiena* [rear] of the formation. While creating a *quadro de terreno,* a sergeant-major used mathematical formulae and a certain dose of improvisation to array the soldiers available in ranks and files of equal length, maintaining as a sole constant the distance between the soldiers (like many of his colleagues Giovambattista Gotti assigned each soldier – who himself occupied about a square foot – the distance of two *piedi* [feet] from the one at his side and six from the one in front). The square itself was built around a rank of standard bearers (from the different units that composed the squadron) surrounded by a small square of halberdiers, in its turn inscribed in the centre of a larger square of pikemen. Generally, only the first ranks of pikemen of the front and rear were equipped with corselets, while the others were made up of *picche secche* [unarmoured pikemen].
The arquebusiers of the *maniche* covered the less crowded and usually unarmoured sides of the squadron of pikemen, reinforcing them with their firepower. The *maniche* could operate separately from the block of pikemen but always remained at a distance that allowed them to take shelter within the reach of these latter's lowered pikes and, in case of need, insert themselves easily in the empty spaces between the ranks of the *battaglia* itself.
A variation of this array frequently used by the Italians and the favourite of the former sergeant-major of Giovanni de' Medici, which he made the base of his *Libro di Memorie,* was distancing (at fifty paces, according to Giovambattista) two *corna* [horns] of arquebusiers from the front and rear of the squadron. These arquebusiers fought *sbandati,* that is in open formation, supported by groups of halberdiers.

obliged to do it because no one else could do it in their place. A squadron was formed not only when there was a need to 'cross pikes', but also with the aim of interdiction, as a deterrent or as a cover. In effect, a whole squadron could 'skirmish', by manoeuvring (often in support of another squadron composed of more steadfast troops) in the field in order to avoid 'colliding' with an enemy formation and by making its presence felt through the pressure of its firepower and that of the large groups of skirmishers that were detached from the main body and continually replaced by others. The Italians soon became masters of this type of 'traccheggiamenti' [stalling].

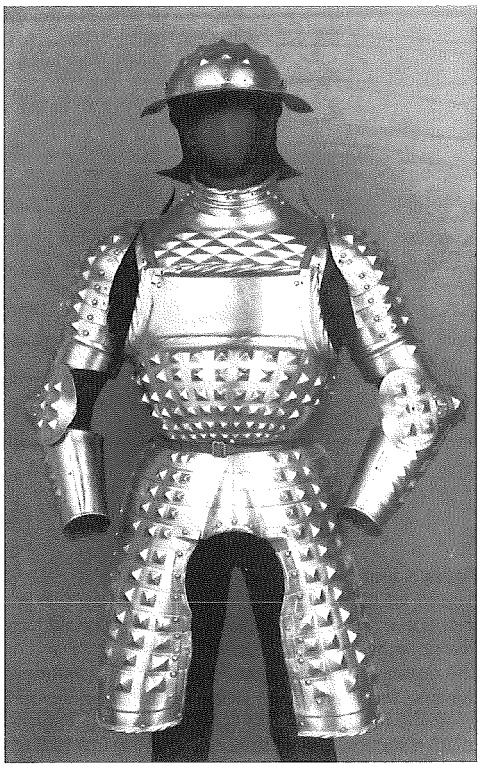


Figure 7
Infantry Corselet *a diamanti* Probably Belonging to Francesco Maria I della Rovere, 1510-1515 (Museo del Bargello, Florence)
The term *corsaletto* [corselet] refers to a set of armour designed to protect a heavy infantryman – such as a front-rank pikeman – from head to the upper thighs or to the knees. The complete version of a *da piede* [infantry] corselet could include a headpiece (usually an open or closed burgonet, morion or *caschetto*), gorget, breastplate, backplate, tassets (thigh defenses - of variable length), pauldrons (shoulder defenses), armlets, vambraces (arm defenses) and gauntlets. Most of the *armati* [armoured] rank-and-file actually wore more or less complete composite (that is, made up of parts from different sources) mass-produced *da munitione* [munition] sets of armour put together in accordance to their fortune and their speciality.

Usually, the *arme offensive* [offensive equipment] of an arquebusier included his gun with its accessories [36] and a sword and/or knife, while the *arme difensive* [defensive equipment], if he carried any, were mostly limited to an open sallet or morion that did not obstruct vision, a padded doublet and/or a buff coat. Of course, an arquebusier could wear any piece of armour he could buy or loot, but he had to remember that speed, lightness and agility remained the best assets of his speciality [37]. The low rate of fire and the limited effective range of their weapons [38] obliged (and allowed) the skirmisher arquebusiers to operate

[36] Although any kind of standardization in size and calibre was still very far off, the barrel of a 'typical' Italian arquebus would be approximately four-five palms long (i.e. more or less 1m) and fired shots that weighed one *oncia* (1 *oncia* = 28.29 grams) or somewhat less, using a charge of about the same weight. The accessories usually included a pouch for the balls, two flasks of powder – a large one for the main charge to be poured in the barrel and a smaller one for the finer powder to be poured in the powder pan (there is no evidence that at this stage Italian arquebusiers used bandoliers with pre-dosed charges) – a few palms of matchcord and a *bacchetta* [ramrod].

[37] On the role of the "archibugiero scaramucciatore" [skirmisher arquebusier], see I. Cinuzzi, *La vera militar disciplina*, Siena, Appresso Salvestro Marchetti, 1604, vol. III, pp. 44-47; A. Cicuta, *Disciplina Militare del signor cavalliere Aurelio Cicuta*, divisa in tre libri, Venice, Appresso Ludovico Avanzo, 1572, pp. 209, 177.

[38] Since the arquebuses were muzzle-loading and (in this phase) smoothbore weapons firing roughly spherical lead shots, it is difficult to calculate their range and rate of fire. The period in which they were used most preceded by several decades the first real efforts to systematize the calibre of arms and the firing procedure and to calculate their effect. Moreover, these efforts principally concerned the muskets, which were then becoming more numerous than

closer to the enemy than the shooters of the subsequent periods, who were increasingly equipped with more powerful weapons, such as "the 'elephant gun' of sixteenth-century shoulder arms" [39], the early musket. What made the Spanish and Italian skirmishers particularly dangerous compared to those of other *nationi* was their willingness, when possible, to engage their opponents in savage mêlées in which all sorts of weapons were used: swords, knives and (last but by no means least) the butts of their arquebuses. Moreover, at this stage (i.e. until the extensive use of muskets made it increasingly unadvisable [40]) the action of the skirmisher arquebusiers was generally supported by teams of heavy infantrymen wearing *corsaletti* [corselets] (Figure 7) who fought in open order; instead of pikes they used shorter *arme in asta* [pole arms] such as halberds, partisans and half-pikes or, especially in the case of Spanish and Italian troops, the sword-and-buckler combination.

Obviously, their skill, ability to act independently and personal aggressiveness also made the Italian troops particularly deft at ambushes, assaults and all the engagements that occurred at some distance from the battlefield, above all during sieges. The phlegmatic Swiss and Landsknechts could act as skirmishers and fight the 'small war', but generally the results – if there were any – were not worth the extra money, time and energy spent in persuading them to do so. Aware of their worth and role, German and Swiss mercenaries often flatly refused to carry out tasks that they did not consider to be among their duties. These *oltramontani* heavy infantrymen thought that it was their task to win battles for their masters, not to bleed in an endless series of small engagements.

The tactical role of the Italian infantry caused the percentage of shooters among its ranks to be much higher than that of the Swiss and Landsknecht units. The pike-to-shot ratio in the Italian contingent under the command of Renzo da Ceri and in the Black Bands (Graph 1 and 2) was not an unusual one. This trend, which was already criticised at the time, would seem to contrast strongly with what was apparently considered the optimal percentage by many European and Italian powers for the reorganization of their infantry forces in the early 1530s. For example, in the early Spanish *tercios* [41], the French provincial *légions* [42] (established in 1534) and even the *legione Feltria* [Feltrian Legion] [43] of the

the arquebuses. According to modern-day tests, under optimal conditions a veteran arquebusier could carry out the laborious process of reloading and firing in about 30 seconds, and though its maximum range was much longer, a shot fired by an arquebus retained an acceptable combination of penetration capacity and accuracy at a distance of under 30 meters. On the peculiar characteristics of 'smoothbore ballistics' and the more technical side of the development of small firearms, see Hall, *Weapons and Warfare*, cit., pp. 134-151.

[39] Hall, *Weapons and Warfare*, cit., p. 177.

[40] Brancaccio, *I carichi militari*, cit., p. 42. Lelio Brancaccio (1560-1637), who held the highest offices in the Spanish-Habsburg military, is not to be confused with Giulio Cesare Brancaccio (1515-1584). The latter Brancaccio, who was more famous for his powerful and fine bass voice and bad temper than for his military expertise, actually claimed – in his main military work (*Il Brancatio della vera disciplina et arte militare*, cit.) – that the pike was an obsolete weapon and that squares were cumbersome and somewhat illogical formations that could be easily defeated by an infantry composed entirely of arquebusiers trained according to a 'secret' method of his and supported by cavalry.

[41] G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 274.

[42] On the French Legions see R.J. Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610*, London, Fontana Press, 1996, pp. 174-175; P. Contamine, *Des guerres d'Italie aux guerres de Religion*, in *Histoire militaire de la France*, edited by P. Contamine, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1992, pp. 250-256; R. de Fourquevaux, *Tre libri della Disciplina Militare*, Venice, Per Michele Tramezzino, 1550, pp. 8v-9r; F. de la Noue, *Discours politiques et militaires du Seigneur de la Noue*, Basel, De l'Imprimerie de François Forest, 1597, pp. 272-284.

duchy of Urbino (organized in 1533 by Giovambattista Gotti) the pikemen and soldiers equipped with other types of mêlée weapons amounted, in theory, to around seventy percent of their total effectives.

However, such a strident contrast was, at least in part, apparent. The net prevalence of the pike element over the 'shot' offered the best guarantees in the case of pitched battle, and therefore suited to the more immediate needs of a state, but for an expeditionary force in the field doing battle was just one of the possible options. In fact, the ability to 'conquer and hold' the battlefield was becoming less and less necessary; and conversely, the ability to flush out the enemy and to engage it in situations that were disadvantageous to it was becoming more and more important. In practice, the actual percentage of arquebusiers and, later, musketeers invariably tended to exceed that of the pikemen. This was not only because pikemen were much more difficult to produce than shooters, but also because the versatility of the latter had multiplied their possible uses.

Being an admirer and plagiarist of Machiavelli, Raymond de Fourquevaux (1509-1574), as late as 1548, was stubbornly echoing the distrust of his model for small firearms, saying that "ciascun al tempo nostro vuol esser archibusiero" [nowadays everybody wants to be an arquebusier] [44], to fight from a distance and to avoid the dangers and fatigues that derived from being a pikeman. The reality of the situation, however, was quite different. Domenico Mora, a veteran of the Venetian campaigns against the Turks and of the French Civil Wars, pointed out that twenty arquebusiers were killed in action for every fallen pikeman [45]. Mora, who was no innovator, actually argued that, in order to shift swiftly from the offensive to the defensive mode and *vice versa*, a really versatile force needed to be composed of at least two thirds shooters. Only when a *principe* recruited an army for the defence of his own domains against invasion, and found himself obliged to adopt an exclusively defensive stance, was the proportion of pike and shot to be necessarily reversed in favour of the pikemen [46].

As we shall see in the next chapters, the divergence between the priorities of an expeditionary body of mercenary infantry specialized in skirmish and assault tactics like the Italian Black Bands and the priorities of a power like their employer, the Florentine republic – which wanted to pursue a defensive strategy – could lead to tension.

[43] BOP, Fondo dei Mss. Oliveriani, 434, XII, ff. 258r-259v. Having joined the service of the della Rovere family after the surrender of the Florentine republic in 1530, Giovambattista Gotti helped the duke of Urbino to reform the militia of his state in 1533, instituting a body of four thousand men under nine captains called the *Legione Feltria* (after the province around the town of Montefeltro).

[44] Fourquevaux, *Tre libri della disciplina militare*, cit., p. 19r.

[45] D. Mora, *Il Soldato di M. Domenico Mora, bolognese, gentilhuomo grisone et cavalliere academico Stordito*, Venice, Appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1570, p. 88.

[46] Mora, *Il Soldato*, cit., pp. 88-93.

3. Cavalry and Infantry

"*.... è cosa degna di riso il leggere le fattioni di quelli huomini d'Arme, più da barriera, che da battaglia*" [47].

Georg Basta (1540-1612) on the heavy cavalry of the Italian Wars

Though the prestige of the corps of the men-at-arms remained very high throughout the Italian Wars, its effective tactical relevance decreased steadily. If its actions were carefully coordinated, cavalry could still turn the tide of a battle, but could no longer win it. At Ravenna [48] (1511) the French cavalry played a key role in defeating the combined Spanish and Papal forces, while at Marignano (1515), the so-called 'battle of giants', the repeated attacks of the *gendarmes* (led by the king in person) tamed the "unrestrained arrogance" of the Swiss "rabble", at least according to Francis I's eulogizers. At Ravenna, however, good artillery preparation and the enemy's lack of coordination had left the French cavalry free to operate, while at Marignano it had taken two consecutive days of almost relentless fighting, the coordinated efforts of the infantry, cavalry and artillery of a huge French host, and the threat of the arrival of a Venetian army from behind, to drive from the field a Swiss army composed almost entirely of infantry, and almost without cavalry and artillery.
As the Wars progressed, the growing integration of the action of small firearms with the infantry of pikemen progressively reduced the margin of manoeuvre on the field of the traditional massive bodies of heavy cavalry (Figure 8). After the first ominous warning of Romagnano [49] (1524), the battle of Pavia (1525) demonstrated in a spectacular way, and at the expense of the best corps of heavy cavalry of the Italian Wars, the level of vulnerability of the men-at-arms. In the *barco* [park] of Mirabello, the timely advance of several units of Imperial infantry pinned King Francis I (who hoped to repeat his exploit of Marignano) and his *gendarmes* in an unfavourable terrain while they reformed their ranks after series of victorious charges. The pikemen left the French no room to manoeuvre and made them the target of the lethal fire of the elusive arquebusiers, before the latter closed in on them to finish their work with swords, daggers and arquebuses fired at point-blank range [50].
However, the margin of manoeuvre of the heavy cavalry (as well as its numbers) was not becoming smaller only because of, and for the benefit of, the infantry. In a type of warfare that by the 1520s consisted mostly of sieges and skirmishes, the heavy cavalrymen could not cause the enemy the massive damage that alone justified the considerable effort of

[47] "... reading of the exploits of those men-at-arms – more suited to tournaments than to battles – is worthy of laughter". G. Basta, *Il governo della cavalleria leggera*, Venice, Appresso Bernardo Gionti, 1612, p. 3.

[48] Taylor, *The Art of War in Italy*, cit., pp. 181-204.

[49] Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, cit., pp. 549-550.

[50] Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, cit., pp. 554-566; J.P. Mayer, *Pavie 1525: l'Italie joue son destin pour deux siècles*, Le Mans, Editions Cénomane, 1998; A. Konstam, *Pavia 1525, the Climax of the Italian Wars*, Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 1996.

Figure 8
Melchior Feselen, *The Siege of Alesia* (detail), 1533 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich).
Order against disorder: a squadron of Imperial men-at-arms (here posing as Roman cavalry) depicted in the act of setting their lances in rest rank after rank and charging a unit of exotic-looking Greek or Albanian *stradioti* (the 'Gaul' cavalry), with their round shields, curved swords and distinctive *cappelletti*.

keeping their awkward and expensive tactical apparatus operational. In the end, the men-at-arms had to yield further ground to other types of 'lighter' and less expensive mounted troops which were much more suited to the new tactical climate and better at acting together with infantry.

One of the most common types of Italian *cavallo leggiero* [light horseman] of the 1520s, was the so-called *alla borgognona* [Burgundian] lancer, the 'descendant' of the lightly armoured and equipped horsemen that had once flanked the man-at-arms inside the *lancia* [51] – the traditional basic sub-unit of Italian heavy cavalry. In fact, the *cavallo borgognone* [Burgundian horseman] could be considered as a 'medium' rather than a 'light' cavalryman, and was usually equipped with a *borgognotta* [burgonet] (Figure 9), which was becoming the traditional headpiece of Italian light horsemen, and a *da cavallo* [horseman's] corselet (with a lance-rest on the breastplate). His main weapon was a lance, accompanied by a mace

[51] On the history and composition of the Italian *lancia*, see Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters*, cit., pp. 148-153.

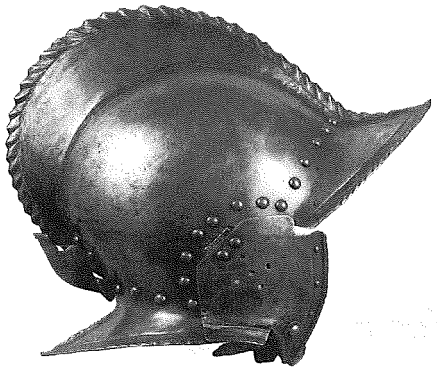


Figure 9
Caremolo Modrone, *Burgonet* a cresta dentata, 1530-1540 (Museo Stibbert, Florence).
Aside from the addition of *guanciali* [cheekpieces], this burgonet is strikingly similar to the one painted by Pace in his portrait of Giovanni de' Medici (Fig. 1). In a great variety of models, in Giovanni's time the burgonet was a headpiece frequently used by both infantry troops and cavalrymen.

and/or a sword; his horse did not usually wear armour, and his retinue was limited to a servant on a mount that served both as a reserve and pack horse.
In his eulogy of Giovanni de' Medici, Giovangirolamo de' Rossi wrote that his half-uncle had been the first to equip all his horsemen with burgonets and to mount them on small 'Turkish' horses instead of the traditional big, expensive and delicate warhorses, thereby rendering the men-at-arms obsolete [52]. However this was not true. Already in 1515 the famous *condottiere* Bartolomeo d'Alviano (1455-1515), one of Giovanni's idols, advised his Venetian employers that it would have been much more profitable to recruit young (18-25 years old) horsemen *alla borgognona*, allowing them to become men-at-arms in due time, rather than enlisting expensive *homeni d'arme* [men-at-arms] of dubious quality [53]. Twelve years later the light cavalry *alla borgognona* had already become a speciality in its own right. Shortly before the Mantuan heavy cavalry withdrew from its service in November 1527, the Florentine republic tried to stipulate a separate *condotta* with its commander Carlo Nuvoloni, offering him the command of a new unit of three hundred light horsemen *alla borgognona* to replace the one hundred and fifty Mantuan men-at-arms currently under his command. Even though the negotiations eventually failed, Nuvoloni, who was already a famous cavalry commander, answered that he was not, in principle, unwilling to accept such an appointment. But he pointed out that since he had already reached the highest level of a cavalry officer's *cursus honorum*, i.e. the command of a company of men-at-arms, some adjustments (and compensations) were necessary. Given that the horseman *alla borgognona* was already a 'mongrel' between a heavy and a light cavalryman, said Nuvoloni, the only way to make such an investment profitable for Florence and desirable for him and for the people he wished to enlist, was to "abastardare" [mongrelize] their wages as well [54]. The process of 'mongrelization' progressed with the Italian Wars, and the distinction between medium and heavy cavalry became increasingly less defined, no longer being limited to the sphere of pay. Giovambattista Gotti, sent by his master the duke of Urbino to inspect the Venetian heavy cavalry gathered in Vicenza in 1548, lamented that the major-

[52] Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni de' Medici*, cit., p. 41.

[53] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XX, p. 151.

[54] Carlo Nuvoloni to Lorenzo Martelli, 6 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 383r

ity of the men-at-arms he had reviewed up to that moment were in fact horsemen equipped with sallets and corselets *alla borgognona* and not with the "boni almette, et buffa et choraze e arnese e schieniere" [good helmets, buffes, cuirasses, cuisses, greaves] [55] suited to their speciality (Figure 10).

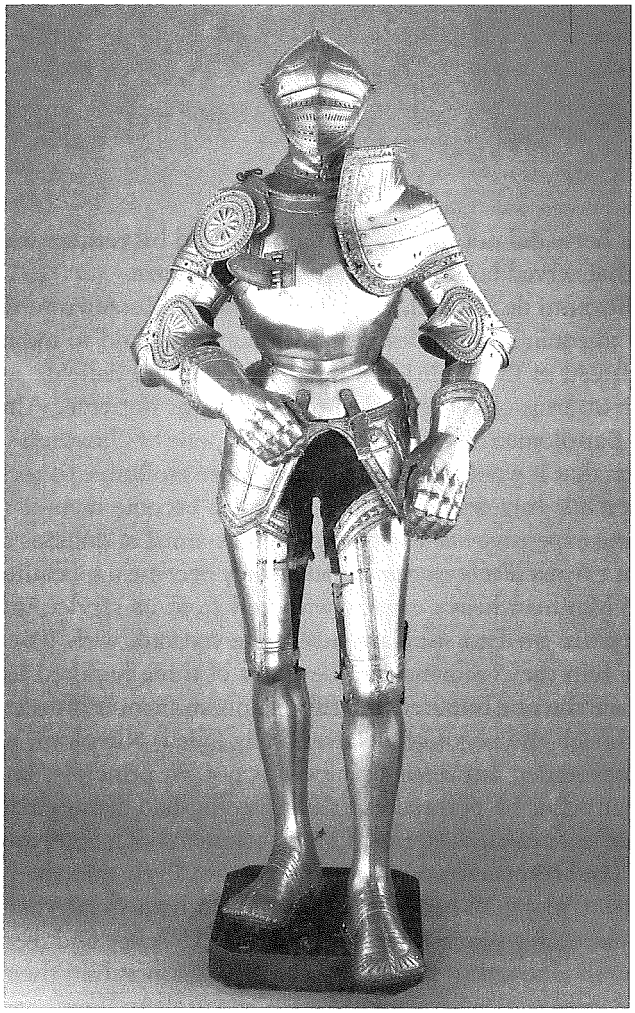


Figure 10
Kolman Helmschmid, *Suit of Armour of the Emperor Charles V*, c. 1525 (Real Armeria, Madrid, A 19 © Patrimonio Nacional).
This splendid armour, known also as "KD armour" from the gilded KD on the shoulder plate, is an example of the high quality of the type of defensive armour used by the forces of heavy cavalry during the 1520s.

[55] Giovambattista Gotti to the duke of Urbino, Vicenza, 3 August 1548, BOP, Fondo dei Mss. Oliveriani, 374, f. 73r.

The 1520s were a transitional period for the development of a second type of traditional Italian light cavalryman: the mounted shooter. The tactical niche which in the following decades would be occupied by regular units of dragoons was, at that point, still shared between the cavalry and the infantry. The matchlock arquebus could not be effectively fired from horseback, so, until it was replaced by its wheel-lock version in the second half of the sixteenth century, the value of these troops as mounted skirmishers was limited, and most of the time they fought dismounted. Moreover, the regular units of mounted crossbowmen and handgunners had not yet lost their original primary function of bodyguards assigned to high-ranking *condottieri*. At the same time (though Giovangirolamo de' Rossi tried to give Giovanni de' Medici the primacy in this field as well) [56], mounting a certain number of arquebusiers on untrained horses of little value whenever it was possible, in order to quickly provide firepower where it was more urgently needed, was an expedient widely practised by all infantry commanders. In addition, it was not unusual for a footsoldier, especially if he was a successful veteran who enjoyed some kind of *soprasoldo* [extra pay], to maintain a horse that relieved him of much of the fatigue during the long marches.

Finally, there was a type of light horseman that, even though not of Italian origin, had long since become a fixed feature of Italian warfare and had influenced the evolution and the tactics of the Italian light cavalry: the stradiot. Though their usefulness and reliability in more 'civilized' wars was often questioned, the Albanian, Greek and Croat *stradioti*, initially recruited by Venice to protect its overseas possessions from the Turks, were deployed also in Italy from 1482 onwards [57]. By the 1520s they still formed the backbone of the Venetian light cavalry, but they were no longer a monopoly of the *Serenissima*, and especially after the Spanish conquest of southern Italy and Apulia relevant numbers of stradiots could be found in the service of the Empire. The equipment, the garb, the tactics and the extreme cruelty of the stradiots mirrored those of their traditional enemy, the Ottomans. Mounted on a small but agile and strong Turkish horse, with an exotic *cappelletto* on his head, lightly armoured and carrying a small shield, a member of a *stradiotìa* (a company of stradiots) usually carried as a main weapon a light lance *alla stradiota* which could be used for throwing or for thrusting at a foe, accompanied by javelins or a Turkish composite bow, a curved sword or a mace. Their allegiance went first to clan and family and, through them, to their leaders. And while this fact considerably enhanced the cohesiveness of the unit, it also created serious problems of discipline. However, in the end, their relative cheapness, their undeniable, if unpredictable, courage and their usefulness in skirmishing, patrolling and foraying made their employers turn a blind eye to their chronic insubordination, to their penchant for banditry, to their highly questionable religious orthodoxy and (when they did not actually encourage them) to the more evidently 'barbaric' aspects of their warfare. As Giovangirolamo de' Rossi took good care to communicate to posterity, Giovanni de' Medici held the Albanian light horsemen in high esteem, and kept many of them in his service.

[56] *Vite di uomini d'armi*, cit., p. 93.

[57] On the history of the stradiots in Venetian service in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see M.E. Mallett - J.R. Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice, c. 1400 to 1617*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 47, 72-74, 174-75, 376-77, 447-51.

Figure 11
Titian, *Charles V on Horseback*, 1548 (Museo del Prado, Madrid).
An exceptional light cavalryman: the emperor Charles V. Charles understood (as did his grandfather Maximilian before him) the necessity of showing himself as a light cavalryman or an infantryman, to give dignity to the corps to whom he owed so much of his famous *fortuna*. The half-armour worn by the emperor in this painting is generally attributed to Desiderius Helmschmid, son of Kolman Helmschmid.

Rossi's attempts at portraying his half-uncle as the father of Italian light cavalry was made considerably easy by the latter's professional involvement with all the various types of light

horsemen of his times, which he had either personally led or utilised. However, even in this respect Giovanni was no innovator, but rather a prominent figure of a general trend which saw the Italian and Spanish light cavalrymen (Figure 11) become masters of their speciality, thanks to their superior skill in granting close and continuous support to infantry forces during skirmishes. This was a skill which would become increasingly useful, given the intensification of skirmish warfare, and one that Giovanni had learned and practised throughout his career: first as commander of cavalry and subsequently as leader of infantry entitled to a command of cavalry.

The French instead remained hostages of their more battle-oriented tactics and of the superior quality of their heavy cavalrymen who, during the first phases of the Italian Wars, had shown a marked superiority over their Spanish, German and Italian counterparts – at least in the event of a direct confrontation between formations of heavy cavalry. In fact, until 1534 every French *lance* of heavy cavalry included at least two *archers* – two light horsemen with lance and sword, rather than mounted bowmen – but these usually fought in direct support of the men-at-arms and did not form autonomous tactical units. The substantial absence of an efficient corps of French light cavalry capable of acting in concert with the infantry and covering skirmishers and assault troops turned out to be always harmful for Giovanni de' Medici's men every time they found themselves combating on the French side, as is shown by several episodes of the siege of Pavia [58] of 1525 and, later, in a far more serious way, during the siege of Naples in 1528.

[58] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XXXVII, p. 609.

II. Between Florence and Rome

1. After the Sack: the Renewal of the League of Cognac

"... et per aver li figlioli si calerebbe le brache el Re francese, e lasciarebe el mondo in bordello" [59].

Paolo Giovio to Ludovico Domenici, 15 February 1527

This is not the right place to give a detailed summary of the first thirty years of the Italian Wars, but a few preliminary considerations are obligatory. After the first phase in which France and Spain contested each other for domination of the Kingdom of Naples, which concluded with the decisive victories of the latter in 1503 (first at Cerignola and then at the Garigliano river), the pendulum of the war swung towards the north of the peninsula. When the first truce was reached in 1516, France successfully affirmed its dynastic claims over the duchy of Milan.

By 1521, when the Italian Wars resumed, the international scenario had radically changed. Two of the protagonists of the first phase of the Italian Wars, Emperor Maximilian I of Habsburg and King Ferdinand II of Aragon were dead, and their nephew Charles (1500-1558) had received the title of Holy Roman Emperor (though until 1530 he was only emperor-elect, not crowned) and inherited the realms of Castile and Aragon. Together with his hereditary Austrian lands and all that his grandfather Maximilian had managed to conserve of the lands of his wife Mary of Burgundy, daughter and heir of Duke Charles the Bold, the dominions of Charles of Habsburg threatened to encircle the France of Francis I (1494-1547), who succeeded Louis XII in 1515. The need for France to impede the consolidation of Imperial dominion on the Italian front as well completed the transformation of the Italian *aventure* into a conflict with truly European dimensions and implications. In November 1521 the Imperial general Prospero Colonna occupied Milan, and French attempts to make up for lost ground ended up in a series of campaigns in which initial successes were followed by defeats (Bicocca, 1522) or disastrous retreats (Romagnano, 1524). However, the real collapse of France's Italian strategy occurred at Pavia (24 February 1525), where the French army suffered a spectacular defeat. The cream of the French nobility was slaughtered and Francis I himself was captured by the Imperial forces and taken to Spain. The terms of the Treaty of Madrid, accepted after long negotiations by Francis I in January 1526 to obtain his freedom, were particularly heavy: among other

[59] "... and to have his sons back the king of France would drop his breeches, and leave the world turned into a brothel", Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLIV, pp. 99-105.

things, France was supposed to cede to Charles V Burgundy and all the territories once owned by Duke Charles the Bold and annexed to France by Louis XI, while Francis I was to renounce all of his claims in Italy. Immediately after being released (rather ingenuously) by the emperor to oversee the enforcement of a treaty which threatened the integrity of his kingdom, Francis I declared null all of his commitments made in captivity. Furthermore, Francis I began to manoeuvre to make Charles V renounce his unreasonable claims to the long-lost Burgundian legacy and to accept a huge ransom in exchange for the Dauphin and his second-born son who had taken his place in Spain as hostages.

On 22 May 1526 another anti-Imperial alliance – the Holy League of Cognac – was formed between France, Venice, the duke of Milan Francesco II Sforza (whose state had been occupied by the Imperialists), Pope Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici) and Florence in an attempt to contain the spread of Habsburg influence in the peninsula. The king of England acted as the League's external protector. Francis I hoped that the formation of the League, his sudden rapprochement with the *Serenissimo di Anglia* Henry VIII (1491-1547) and the mounting Turkish threat from East would be enough to soften Charles V's position without intervening too directly, but he was wrong. Francis I underestimated Charles's determination and overestimated his Italian allies' military capabilities. These factors, combined with the king of France's unwillingness to take the lead of the composite Italian anti-Imperialist front openly and to support it militarily in a meaningful way by sending an army (he wanted his sons back, not to wage a full-scale war against the Empire) were to cause Francis I's plan to backfire in a most spectacular way.

The army of the League, led by the duke of Urbino, first failed to take Milan and then, lacking troops that could successfully 'cross pikes' with the more than 10,000 Landsknechts who had crossed the Alps in winter under the command of Georg von Frundsberg (1473-1528), could only offer an elastic resistance to the enemy, trying to exhaust its strength with frequent skirmishes [60] before it could unite with the Imperial forces in Lombardy under the command of Charles III of Bourbon [61] (1490-1527). In this plan Giovanni de' Medici (at that time captain general of the League's infantry) and his infantry troops were to play an essential role. However, it was exactly at this point that the luck of the 'Great Devil' Giovanni (as he was referred to by his enemies) abandoned him. On 25 November, at the end of a clash with the Landsknechts of Frundsberg at Governolo, near Mantua, the ball of a falconet (a piece of light artillery) hit Giovanni's right leg, shattering his thighbone (see Figure 12). After atrocious agony, the young *condottiere* died in Mantua during the night between 29 and 30 November 1526, with Pietro Aretino at his bedside [62]. In mid-February 1527 Frundsberg's and the constable of Bourbon's troops met near Piacenza, before continuing their march towards the south - reaching together a total of about 20,000 Italian, Spanish and German soldiers. Initially, the objective of Bourbon was to invade the Papal States to threaten to 'checkmate' Pope Clement VII, foremost promoter in Italy of the Holy League of Cognac, obliging him to withdraw his support from the anti-Imperial alliance, thus putting an end to the war.

[60] On the campaign of 1526-27, see Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, cit., pp. 568-582.

[61] V.J. Pitts, *The Man Who Sacked Rome: Charles de Bourbon, Constable of France (1490-1527)*, New York, P. Lang, 1993.

[62] Aretino, *Lettere*, cit., vol. I, pp. 17-24 and Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, cit., pp. 88-91.

8 Ioh. Med. cum impetum Germanorū Borbonio duce crebris pratys reprimeret, tardaraqz., cumqz. pro libertate Italię acerrime pugnaret tormenti minoris ictu 29 annum agens pre dolore occumbit

Figure 12
Hendrik Goltzius, *The Death of Giovanni de' Medici*, from Jan van der Straet, *Mediceae familiae rerum feliciter gestarum victoriae et triumphi*, Antwerp, 1583 (cliché Bibliothèque Nationale de France).
The last print of the series dedicated to Giovanni in the work illustrated by Stradanus (Jan van der Straet) celebrating the deeds of the house of Medici is a very free interpretation, but also a very interesting one, of the last engagement of Giovanni, on horseback, at the point of receiving the fatal wound which would lead to his premature death. Although the entire scene is structured to converge on Giovanni, he is shown small enough to leave great space for the details of the elements that compose it – such as the group of arquebusiers in the foreground in different phases of reloading their arms and waiting to go into action, the several blocks of pikemen and the troops intent on skirmishing among them.

Thanks to one of those well-timed lightning advances for which Charles de Bourbon was famous, the Imperial army succeeded in outmanoeuvring the enemy near Florence, where the troops of the League had gathered to cover the city and to suppress a short-lived anti-Medicean uprising [63] (26 April). The way to Rome was open. However, neither Bourbon nor Frundsberg had begun the campaign with sufficient funds, and now they raised the bid in an attempt to find a way out of the increasingly desperate situation of the Imperial forces in northern Italy. The two Imperial generals persuaded soldiers and officers to serve by promising future earnings and booty. They continued to promise the future payment of arrears while marching through hostile territories, cut off from their main base of opera-

[63] J.N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 191-202.

tions (Milan), tailed by a powerful enemy army, without adequate provisions and in growing strategic and politic isolation, caused also by the contrasts between Bourbon and the Imperial viceroy of Naples Charles de Lannoy (1482-1527), in charge of the negotiations with the pope. The Spanish, Italian and German contingents mutinied in turn and on various occasions, refusing to march and claiming their back pay. Nevertheless, between the manoeuvres of Bourbon and the irresolution of the pope (resulting from his wavering temper and from the empty reassurances of his allies) the Imperial troops ended up by passing the 'point of no return', beyond which the soldiers did not need to be persuaded that there was no way back or that the only hope they had to get their due recompense was to reach the richest city of Christendom. By the time Lannoy and Clement VII reached an agreement for a truce of eight months and for the complete withdrawal of the Imperial troops, the constable of Bourbon could not honour it without causing the collapse of the only Imperial army in Italy. The demands of the Imperial troops had grown well beyond the modest offers of money made by the pope in exchange for their withdrawal, and that which they claimed could only be taken or extorted, not conceded. Instead of falling apart as one would have expected, as the Imperial troops advanced they spontaneously acquired bandits, deserters and thousands of unemployed Italian soldiers whom Clement VII had imprudently discharged to save money and respect the terms of the truce with the Empire. In the end, the total number grew to about 35,000.

On 25 April the pope, recognizing the danger and finding himself isolated, repudiated the truce. On 5 May 1527 the Imperial army (without artillery) found itself with the gates of Rome closed before it and the threat of the arrival, in a few days, of the main body of the army of the League's army behind it. The Imperial troops began their attack at dawn on 6 May 1527, and though Bourbon was killed in the first assault, they managed to overcome the small and motley troops (about 4,000 Italian infantrymen) under the command of Lorenzo Orsini, better known as Renzo da Ceri (1475-1536), to whom Clement VII had belatedly entrusted the defence of the walls of Rome, obsolete and in a state of neglect. The Imperialists took Rome by storm, subjecting the Holy City to a brutal sack and forcing Clement VII – who had initially taken refuge in the fortress of Castel Sant'Angelo – to surrender after a short siege on 5 June [64]. On 18 May the army of the League camped at less than twenty kilometres from Rome, but could not advance further. After a few inconclusive attempts to assist the pope and the cardinals in Castel Sant'Angelo, the duke of Urbino and other generals of the League decided (31 May) to retreat northwards.

After the Sack, the whole anti-Imperial coalition was on the border of collapse, and the situation of its army was critical: each day the infantrymen (already owed back wages) deserted by the hundreds, and the inevitable surrender of the pope would bring to the quick disbandment or withdrawal of most of the papal forces and to the progressive isolation of the army of the League in an increasingly hostile and chaotic territory. And worse was still to come: the capture of Clement VII had meant the breaking of the Medicean Rome-Florence axis of power, that is, the alliance between Florentine finance and the temporal power of the pope. When, on 11 May 1527, news of the sack of Rome first reached

[64] On the events that brought to the sack of Rome and on the sack itself, see J. Hook, *The Sack of Rome*, London, Macmillan, 1972; M.L. Lenzi, *Il Sacco di Roma del 1527*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1978.

Florence – at that point the closest point of support for the army of the League – the opponents of the Medici overthrew their regime and restored (for the last time) the republican institutions abolished in 1512. Initially, it was not clear if the new anti-Medici government would remain loyal to the League of Cognac.

The once-mighty army of the League was soon reduced to about twelve thousand men divided more or less equally between the French, Venetian and Florentine contingents, and was progressively pushed northwards along the Tiber valley, in the direction of the border with the Florentine and the Sienese states. Given this situation, the only option left to the duke of Urbino was to pursue a strategy of containment, maintaining a military presence between the Imperial army and its possible targets in central and northern Italy.

The *fortuna di Cesare* (that is, the same incredible series of events that had helped Charles V every time his numerous and powerful enemies seemed to have the upper hand) had triumphed again. However, in the end the emperor was unable to exploit fully the success of his army. It had been the emperor's extreme financial and political weakness that had turned his only army in Italy into an avalanche that had overwhelmed his enemies, and what had happened had not only played havoc with his enemies' plans but with his own as well. Charles V had to be extremely careful about taking advantage of the appalling sack of the Holy City while firmly (and sincerely) dissociating himself from it, having to bargain hard and shrewdly to regain control of his army and reach an agreement with his illustrious but awkward prisoner, whose support he needed if he wished to be crowned emperor.

This gave time to Charles's enemies to rally and reform their ranks. One of the first decisions taken by the reborn Florentine republic was to remain faithful to the League of Cognac and assume Clement VII's place as the employer of some of the key units on the joint papal-Florentine payroll. In particular, this meant the Black Bands, the best and most expensive unit of Italian infantry available. There were several reasons for this choice. First of all, the Florentine republic had always been – often against its interests and, in the end, against its better judgement – a staunch ally of France [65], while its rivals, the republics of Siena and Lucca, were traditionally pro-Imperialist. Moreover, the republican leaders knew all too well that, once free, Clement VII would leave no stone unturned in order to restore the power of his family in Florence, so their freedom needed a powerful protector. By becoming France's most fervent Italian ally at such a difficult moment, the Florentine republic believed that a victorious Francis I would eventually value their services more than those of the wavering Medici pope. It is also worth remembering that all Florentines, regardless of their political leanings, at that point saw the mutinous Imperial army that occupied Rome as a veritable sword of Damocles hanging over their heads. In the eyes of the Ten (the Florentine magistracy in charge of diplomatic and military matters, the *Dieci di Balìa*), the Imperial host was an "exercito del Diavolo" [devil's army] that was to be kept far from Florence at all costs.

The situation of the duke of Ferrara Alfonso I d'Este (1476-1534) was similar to that of Florence. Ferrara was a papal fief. As a cardinal, Giulio de' Medici had already plotted to

[65] On the foreign policy of the last Florentine republic, see R. von Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, Turin, Einaudi, 1970; J.N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic, 1512-1530*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983; C. Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic*, London, Methuen, 1925.

strip the house of Este of its *stato* and return it to the Holy See, and as pope he had remained hostile to Duke Alfonso I. In addition, the duke had earned the pontiff's undying hatred when, instead of opposing the advance of the troops of the duke of Bourbon, he had actually offered support and transit to the Imperial army during the most critical moment of its march southwards (the falconet whose shot killed Giovanni de' Medici was a 'present' sent from Ferrara to Frundsberg's camp), taking advantage of the chaotic situation following the Sack to invade the Church lands and seize the city of Modena (June 1527), once part of the Este dominion. With the French proposing a renewal of the papal investiture of Ferrara, the renunciation by Clement VII of all future action against the duke's possessions or those of his successors, and the marriage of his son and heir Ercole with Princess Renée, daughter of the late king of France Louis XII, the duke eagerly entered into negotiations with the League of Cognac.

The Marquis of Mantua Federico II Gonzaga (1500-1540), whose younger brother Ferrante was one of the generals of the Imperial army and a favourite of Charles V, had started secret negotiations in order to enter Imperial service. Technically speaking, Federico II was captain general of all papal and Florentine forces, and his *condotta* would not expire until the end of 1527, but this prestigious military appointment had crowned his alliance with the papacy and the Medici, not with Florence. After the sack of Rome and the ensuing declaration of neutrality imposed by the Imperialists on Clement VII, the fact of being, albeit only formally, the highest-ranking officer of a command made up entirely of troops of the Florentine republic (which ranked first on the pope's blacklist), represented a danger and an embarassment rather than an honour. On the other hand, a small power such as Mantua simply could not afford to take too rigid a stance. As the anti-Habsburg front was revitalized by the descent in Italy of a large French army, Federico II Gonzaga could only postpone his negotiations with Charles V which were already well advanced, and accept, in December 1527, generous (and increasingly pressing) French offers to join the League again. It was a matter of *force majeure*.

In the end, however, what really ensured the survival of the anti-Imperialist front in the peninsula was the support of the republic of Venice, by far the most powerful Italian member of the League of Cognac. Between the troops in Lombardy and those in the Papal States the *Serenissima* republic paid an army of about thirty thousand soldiers, and maintained an almost constant (and very expensive) naval presence in the Tyrrhenian and Ligurian seas [66].

Of all the Italian powers, with the obvious exception of the Habsburg domains – that is, the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples – only the republics of Genoa, Siena and Lucca (barring a radical and traumatic change of regime) were openly pro-Empire. However, of these three republics only the first (Genoa) played a crucial role in the Habsburg strategic system as a naval base and as transit point for the Imperial troops moving between Naples, Spain and Lombardy, and could thus be considered a prime target for the forces of the League of Cognac during the forthcoming campaign

[66] Hale, *The Military Organization*, cit., pp. 225-227; on the Venetian contribution to the war of the League of Cognac, see also F. Bennato, *La partecipazione militare di Venezia alla Lega di Cognac*, in "Archivio Veneto", 1956; V. Vitale, *L'impresa di Puglia degli anni 1528-1529*, in "Nuovo Archivio Veneto", XII (1906).

Given its delicate position between Florence and Genoa (especially after Genoa was reconquered by the League in August 1527 – see Appendix 4), the small republic of Lucca, that had a very strong pro-Imperial tradition, did not change its policy but kept a low profile and maintained a wary neutrality – helped in this by its strategically relatively unimportant location. On the contrary, the restless republic of Siena [67], ruled in that period by its more radically popular and traditionally Ghibelline components, made little effort to remain quiet. For the League of Cognac, Siena represented a problem. Defined by the traditionally Guelph Florentine Ten (hardly impartial observers, when it came to their historical rivals) as a "stato bestiale" [bestial state] [68] ruled by intractable "cervelli" [brains] [69], Siena was the granary of the Imperial army and its more obvious first point of arrival, should it suddenly decide to leave Rome and march northwards. Yet without Imperial support, the offensive capacity of the Sienese republic, which was unable to recruit a substantial number of professional soldiers, was negligible, and its militias represented a problem (more a persistent nuisance, actually) only for the Florentine-ruled towns and *ville* along the border [70]. Siena and its domain would have been vulnerable to any resolute attack brought about by an army like that of the League in central Italy, provided that this army could count on the support and on the contacts of the numerous Sienese exiles and provided that it was equipped with an adequate artillery train. However, the only power that could sustain such a momentous initiative, as well as the one that in theory would profit the most from Siena's defeat, was the Florentine republic, which claimed not to have "stomacho da gran pasto" [the stomach of a big eater] [71]. So every time the project was proposed by its allies the republic dismissed it as a dangerous diversion that would vanify all its efforts to keep the war far from Tuscany. As a matter of fact, Florence, knowing all too well that at that point she had neither the military might nor the political autonomy necessary to subdue its ancient rival by herself once and for all, preferred to 'cohabit' with a Sienese regime which, unstable and rabidly pro-Imperialist as it was, was also utterly hostile to the Medici, rather than risk seeing the Petrucci family and other factions which had strong ties with Clement VII restored to power by its allies of the League.

By July 1527 the king of France had decided that time was ripe to make another, more incisive, attempt to persuade Charles V to renounce his unreasonable claims. However, given the catastrophic failure of the preceding year, Francis I decided to raise the stakes and to take the matter directly into French hands, organizing a massive army that would cross the Alps in August under the command of Odet de Foix (1481-1528), *vicomte* de Lautrec and marshal of France (in that way the person of the king would not be endangered). A major role in Francis I's decision was played by the fact that, after the sack of Rome and the pope's imprisonment, Henry VIII decided that he had made the most of his alleged neutrality and,

[67] A.K. Isaacs, *Popolo e monti nella Siena del primo Cinquecento*, in "Rivista Storica Italiana", LXXXII (1970).

[68] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 7 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 118r.

[69] The Ten to Vitello Vitelli, 14 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 99r.

[70] On the situation on the Florentine-Sienese border in 1527: M. Arfaioli, *Carlo Strozzi, Capitano e Commissario di Volterra, luglio-dicembre 1527*, in "Rassegna Volterrana", LXXIII-LXXIV (1996-1997).

[71] The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 42, f. 207r.

in the hope of winning the pope's consent to his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Charles V's aunt [72], cast off the role of external protector of the League of Cognac by officially joining the anti-Imperialist front.

Since August 1525 the Treaty of the More linked France and England in a defensive alliance. On 18 August 1527, however, Cardinal Wolsey sanctioned the rapprochement between France and England by signing the Treaty of Amiens [73]. According to the treaty, the *Serenissimo di Anglia* – who incidentally seemed to have been an admirer of the late Giovanni de' Medici and held the Italian Black Bands in very high esteem to the point that "non pareva che si potesse saziare di lodarle" [it seemed that he never tired of praising them] [74] - agreed, among other things, to pay more than thirty thousand *scudi* a month for six months to sustain the League's military effort and the invasion of Italy. The English subsidy utilised to pay German Black Bands (the veteran Landsknecht unit in French service) was subsequently prolonged for six more months [75], but the measure of the importance Henry VIII attributed to this Italian expedition is the fact that he did not content himself with sending money to France and ambassadors to Italy, but decided to add two hundred English light horse under the command of Sir Robert Jernegan (?-1528) to the French expeditionary force.

After a long series of military defeats and, in particular, after Pavia, and the risks taken by the whole kingdom with the imprisonment of Francis I, there was little enthusiasm left in France for the Italian *aventure*. In July 1527 the Florentine Ten were disappointed to hear from their ambassadors at the French court that there the general feeling in that country was that this was to be France's last, decisive effort [76]. However, the lack of enthusiasm noticed by the emissaries of the Ten was only partly due to the widespread bewilderment afflicting the French military establishment after a long series of crushing defeats. The real point in August 1527 was that for Francis I the Italian *aventure* was now just a means, and not an end. Until the two princes returned home there could be no real French Italian policy and there was no way of avenging the *honte* of Pavia. Lautrec had accepted the title of captain general of the new army of the League almost unwillingly, probably because from the start he resented the fact that he had been destined to lead not a real campaign of conquest, but to carry out a very costly, elaborate and dangerous gambit: i.e. a sacrifice that would allow his master to resume negotiations with the emperor from a less unfavourable position.

[72] On the struggle for the divorce and Cardinal Wolsey's initiative in foreign policy during this period, see J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1968, pp. 198-240 and S.J. Gunn, *Wolsey's foreign policy and the domestic crisis of 1527-1528*, in *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, edited by S.J. Gunn and P.G. Lindley, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991; P. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal; the rise and the fall of Thomas Wolsey*, London, Barrie & Jenkins, 1990.

[73] Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, cit., pp. 272-274.

[74] Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, p. 339.

[75] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1905-1906.

[76] The Ten to Roberto Acciaioli, 29 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 42, f. 36r.

2. "Battles of Cursed Wit". The Debates in the *Consulta*

"Commissario, voi scrivete troppo minutamente de ogni cosa" [77].

Provveditore Alvise Pisani to *Commissario*
Lorenzo Martelli

By the end of June 1527 the army of the League of Cognac had been forced to withdraw to the northern part of the Papal States, near its borders with both the Florentine and Sienese dominions, between Città della Pieve and Lake Trasimeno at the mouth of the Val di Chiana. One after another, the cities and seignories of the papal state were offering their support, or at least their neutrality, to the dreaded Habsburg forces, while the League's army was getting weaker by the day through desertion and could barely sustain even a purely defensive campaign. The forces of the League could not withdraw further, from their position without entering Florentine territory, with the consequences that the republican leaders knew all too well: limited *de facto* sovereignty for them and devastation for their precious *contado*. Aware of this danger since the very first day of its restoration, the republic fought to make its voice heard in the camp of the League by sending representatives there, recruiting a prestigious military leader and by trying to take control of the Black Bands and the Mantuan heavy cavalry, units whose pay had largely come from the Florentines since the beginning of the war. In this section we will investigate the first two measures.

While on his way to Rome to try to relieve Clement VII, who was besieged in Castel Sant'Angelo, the duke of Urbino, captain general of the army of the League of Cognac, had taken advantage of the pope's weakness and his command of the troops to return Perugia's seigniory to the partisans of two enemies of the Medici: Malatesta (1491-1531) and Orazio (1493-1528) Baglioni, sons of an old ally of his, Giampaolo Baglioni (1470-1520), the famous *condottiere* (and alleged inventor of *zabaglione)* [78] who had been executed in Rome after a mock trial on the orders of the Medici Pope Leo X. The duke managed to expel their rival, their relative Gentile Baglioni, a protégé of Clement VII, also securing in a single move the southern border of his duchy and taking the first of many revenges on the Medici, who had dispossessed him of his *stato* from 1516 to 1521. While Malatesta, the elder brother and head of this branch of the Baglioni, was obliged to remain in northern Italy, seeing

[77] "*Commissario*, you write too meticulously of everything".

[78] According to an Italian popular anecdote, while besieging the fortress of Scandiano, Giampaolo Baglioni (whose name in that part of the peninsula could also be pronounced as *Zuan Bajon*) ordered his cooks feed his famished troops by mixing together what little had been found when raiding the countryside (the defenders having already created 'scorched earth' around the fortress). It thus happened that the cooks mixed together eggs, white wine, honey and aromatic herbs, and gave the soldiers the resulting drink instead of the usual soup. Much to Baglioni's surprise (and relief), his men seemed to greatly enjoy that improvised, yet savoury, mash. The next day the Perugian *condottiere*'s troops, still invigorated, conquered Scandiano. When their astonished prisoners enquired how this had occurred, the men of Baglioni began to extoll the virtues of their *Zuanbajoun*.

that he held the prestigious position of captain general of the Venetian infantry, it was Orazio who first returned to Perugia to defend the paternal inheritance in the name of both brothers.

Arrested in Rome in January 1524 together with Gentile by order of Clement VII, Orazio Baglioni spent the three following years as a prisoner in Castel Sant'Angelo (Gentile, however, was released in June 1524) until the Medici pope, desperate for good military commanders – and having received guarantees from Venice and Malatesta Baglioni that Orazio would serve him faithfully – liberated the Perugian *condottiere* at the beginning of January 1527, giving him command of a Franco-papal seaborne expeditionary force that attacked the Kingdom of Naples, conquering Castellamare and Salerno. In May 1527 Orazio organised and directed, with Renzo da Ceri, the defence of Rome against the Imperial army. Rather ironically, once the papal forces were overwhelmed and the sack of the Holy City had begun, Orazio found himself once more confined in Castel Sant'Angelo – this time as commander of the last defenders of the pope's person. The Perugian *condottiere* performed this duty with his characteristic energy and firmness, to the point that he personally killed defenders who dared to desert their posts, as we learn form Benvenuto Cellini's (1500-1571) testimony [79].

After Clement VII decided to surrender, the Imperialists allowed Orazio to leave the fortress and Rome itself without even paying a ransom. Back in Perugia, he made an uneasy and insincere peace agreement with his rival Gentile for the greater good of their common *patria*, threatened by the presence of so many foreign troops marching across the Papal States, while at the same time he was gathering around himself, on his elder brother's behalf, the many partisans of their branch of the Baglioni. He then waited for the dice to be thrown before making an ulterior move. The stalemate in Perugia did not go unnoticed by the leaders of the Florentine republic. Orazio, like Malatesta, was a renowned infantry commander, and if the sons of Giampaolo had prevailed over their pro-Medici rivals, the *stato* of Perugia could become an effective buffer zone just outside the Florentine domain, the place to gather and re-organize the League's army and contain every possible Imperial initiative. These elements persuaded the Ten to overlook the detail that Orazio was married to Francesca Petrucci, a daughter of the 'tyrant' of Siena Pandolfo Petrucci (?-1512), and to enter into negotiations, which culminated on 27 June 1527 with the Perugian *condottiere*'s appointment as captain general of the Florentine infantry [80].

At the same time, the disgraced and dispirited Papal Lieutenant Francesco Guicciardini, deprived of all real power and authority and compromised by his support for the past regime, was quickly replaced by Raffaele Girolami [81], first *commissario generale in campo*

[79] On the friendship between Benvenuto Cellini and Orazio Baglioni, see B. Cellini, *La vita di Benvenuto di M° Giovanni Cellini fiorentino*, in *Opere di Benvenuto Cellini*, edited by G. G. Ferrero, Turin, UTET, 1980, pp. 141, 145, 146, 153, 154. Benvenuto's brother Giovanfrancesco, nicknamed Cecchino del Piffero, had been a soldier of the companies of Giovanni de' Medici.

[80] ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, ff. 3r-4r.

[81] Raffaele Girolami was to be the last gonfalonier of the Florentine Republic. Although a member of a moderate faction and a friend of Ferrante Gonzaga, who became supreme commander of the Imperial army after the death of the prince of Orange at the battle of Gavinana (1530), Girolami was first imprisoned and subsequently beheaded. See Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, cit., pp. 120, 141, 184.

appointed by the republic and an influential figure of the new government. However, during Girolami's period of service in Umbria (from June to September 1527) the military situation was still dangerously fluid. The various factions of the reborn republic struggled to find a common line of action, while the *commissario* simply dealt with the various emergencies that occurred, trying to keep all remaining forces of the League together. Girolami had held the same office during the short war between Florence and the duke of Urbino after Leo X's death and he did not write to his superiors frequently, counting on his prestige and personal experience; at times, indeed, he personally took the initiative in ways that afterwards caused embarrassment to both his masters and his successors. However, by September 1527 the situation had become stable enough both in Florence and on the field to allow the dispatch of a new *commissario* with a definite political and military mandate. The man chosen for this arduous task was Lorenzo di Niccolò Martelli [82], who belonged to a family that had distinguished itself by its strong pro-republican leanings and by the literary ambitions (if not talent) of some of its members, rather than for its wealth or for the effective political influence it actually wielded. With his frequent and long reports to the Ten, Martelli's journal of his activities was punctuated with perspicacious (and often witty) considerations on the nature of the soldiers and on the various duties of his office.

One of the first official acts of the newly-appointed Florentine *commissario* after his arrival in Umbria was to take his predecessor's place at the table of the *consulta*, the informal consultative body that frequently assembled the top-ranking military commanders and diplomatic representatives present in the League's camp. Given the rank and *riputatione* of many of his interlocutors, Martelli had obviously been quite worried about this aspect of his appointment; after a first meeting, however, he reported to the Ten that, to his great relief, "questi son poi huomini come noi, et qualcosa di meno ne' discorsi" [they are men like us, and somewhat less articulate] [83].

As had been pointed out almost a year before by Francesco Maria della Rovere and by Giovanni de' Medici, the main problem of their army was that it had no real backbone: not one of its three main components (that is the French, the Venetian and the Florentine) was clearly dominant over the others; a situation that had political as well as tactical consequences. In his capacity as captain general of the whole host (as well as of all the Venetian forces) the duke of Urbino in theory enjoyed full powers, but in actual fact many important decisions regarding the army of the League were taken collectively. Martelli strictly followed the *commissione* given him by the Ten, and tried to cope with the lack of authoritativeness of the reborn Florentine republic on the international scene. The fact that he was appointed *commissario in campo* in such difficult times, moreover with his son Niccolò still prisoner in the papal stronghold of Civitavecchia, attests both to Martelli's loyalty to the new regime and to his enmity with the Medici, a hatred strong enough to

[82] Lorenzo di Niccolò di Ugolino Martelli was enrolled in the *Arte della lana* in 1485. During the first republic he was captain of Pistoia in 1507, of Montepulciano in 1511, and of Cortona in 1513. During the siege of 1529-1530 he became one of the Ten and, eventually, one of the three *commissarii* in charge of overseeing the defence of the city. Banished to the Mugello after the fall of the Republic, Martelli died in Montespertoli while Alessandro was duke of Florence.

[83] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 27 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 107r.

lead the historian Paolo Giovio, a partisan of Clement VII, to describe him as an "empio et scelerato huomo" [impious and wicked man] [84].

Even though many ambassadors and high-ranking officers and military commanders sat occasionally at the *consulta*'s table, its permanent members were the *capitano generale* Francesco Maria della Rovere, the Venetian *provveditore* Alvise Pisani (?-1528), the two leaders of the French forces Federico Gonzaga, count of Sabbioneta and *signore* of Bozzolo [85] (?-1527), and Marquis Michele Antonio di Saluzzo [86] (1484-1528), lieutenant general of the Most Christian King in Italy, Orazio Baglioni and the Florentine *commissario*. Florence had finally negotiated the first critical period of transition from Medici to republican régime, and from his first *consulte* Martelli took a more active part in the decision-making process, defending his city's interests; "gli hanno visto che io non sono per cedere se non ad reputatione et honore di Vostre Signorie. In modo che io dubito che io non paia loro un pò troppo rigido. Et per Dio non bisogna manco" [they have seen that I would only give in to preserve the reputation and honour of Your Lordships. In this way, I am afraid to appear too rigid before them. But for God's sake, it must be so] [87]. However, it appeared clear that even though sharing the common danger and expenses, Florence was in the minority, and that, as Lorenzo Martelli put it, "e' duoi terzi del giuoco è loro" [two thirds of the game is in their hands] [88].

France and Venice – or, more precisely, the duke of Urbino, *provveditore* Pisani, Federico da Bozzolo and the marquis of Saluzzo – were bent on a line of action that paid little heed to the interests of the Florentine republic. Florence was the member of the League most directly in danger and its allies exploited shrewdly the great military and political weaknesses of the republic (its equal exposure to an advance of the Imperial army and to a possible liberation of the pope) to impose their conditions and to cover their faults. "Costoro ci hanno per cenci. Par loro che noi abbiamo bisogno di loro... et come io non approvo in tutto le loro deliberationi saltano come bestie, che mai più vidi sì molesta cosa" [they treat us like rags. They believe that we need them... and when I do not approve of all their deliberations, they become like beasts, the likes of which I have never seen] [89]. As far as possible the *commissario* tried to minimize the differences – "bisognami fare più giuochi che una bertuccia" [I have to be more acrobatic than a monkey] [90] – but when all the others

[84] P. Giovio, *La seconda parte dell'Historie del suo tempo*, Venice, Per Comin da Trino di Monferrato, 1565, p. 38r.

[85] Federico di Giovanfrancesco Gonzaga was a staunchly pro-French partisan who started his military career in 1496, following Charles VIII in France and then Louis XII during the conquest of Milan. At the time of the League of Cambrai he fought against Venice. In 1512 he was wounded during the battle of Ravenna. Sacked by Lorenzo de' Medici from the office of commander of the papal forces, he joined duke Francesco Maria I della Rovere in his attempt to reconquer Urbino. In 1521 Federico was again in French service against papal and Imperial forces. He fought at Bicocca (1522) and was among the nobles captured at Pavia (1525).

[86] Michele Antonio di Saluzzo was brought up at the French court of Louis XII. Captured at the battle of Novara, he lost his marquisate and had to pay a ransom of 16,000 ducats to the duke of Milan. He fought at Pavia and was afterwards appointed admiral of Guyenne and lieutenant-general of Francis I in Italy.

[87] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 121r.

[88] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 10 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 231v.

[89] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, location unknown, date unknown, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 243v.

[90] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 239r.

turned on him "come cani" [like dogs] [91] Martelli could only yield, in order to avoid complete isolation. In the *consulta*, the borderline between the political and the personal spheres was somewhat blurred; the relationship between the marquis of Saluzzo and Florence was, for example, particularly strained. The Florentine republic was staunchly pro-French and had an almost Messianic confidence in Lautrec's arrival, but no trust in Michele Antonio and tried constantly to discredit him in the eyes of Lautrec and the *Cristianissimo* – quite an easy task, given the poor conditions of the French and Venetian forces. Merchants to the bone, the Ten argued that they would never entrust to the marquis the "conto della cassa" [the cash-box tally] [92].

However, Martelli's main interlocutor was his Venetian counterpart the *provveditore* Alvise Pisani. The relationship between the two field-commissioners epitomised the ancient tradition of rivalry between the republics they represented. But it was an unequal struggle, for Pisani was a rich and influential Venetian patrician, father of a cardinal and an experienced diplomat, who enjoyed a freedom of action unknown to the Florentine *commissario*. To make matters worse, thanks to the Ten's eagerness to show their allies that the Republic had nothing to hide, the Venetian ambassador in Florence, Marco Foscari, was often able to report the most important and confidential parts of Martelli's letters to Pisani. The *commissario* had even to suffer the indignity of being lectured on what he was supposed to write in his reports to Florence, considered by the *provveditore* to be far too detailed and, in fact, an obstacle to the progress of their common cause [93]. Neither Florence nor Venice, argued Pisani, really needed to know all the minutiae and insults that the members of the *consulta* threw in each other's face as they sat around the *tavola*. Fortunately for us, Martelli did not listen to what was probably the only disinterested advice that Pisani gave him.

It has to be said that, from a strictly professional point of view, Alvise Pisani was of course right; yet in the long run Lorenzo Martelli had his revenge: what remains of the *provveditore* – from the memory of his cunning and duplicity to his marked Venetian accent – are the detailed reports of somebody who was clearly his inferior as a diplomat. The correspondence between the *provveditore* and the Senate relating to the 1527-1528 period is lost (what little is left can be found in Marin Sanuto's *Diarii*) but Lorenzo Martelli, who had to compete with him constantly, has left us an intriguing, if highly partial and incomplete, picture of Alvise Pisani and his activities. Thanks to the combination of garrulousness and poor selectivity so criticised by Pisani, Martelli's letters are a precious, if disorganized, source of information and details usually not found in the more refined reports. Through his descriptive talent, a world of subterfuges, winks, overheard phrases and the sudden changes of expressions and tones around the *consulta*'s table suddenly comes to life.

There was nothing that could animate a session of the *consulta* so much as the constant complaints of the *commissario* about the lamentable state in which Florence's allies kept their troops in the League's camp. According to the articles of the League of Cognac, its

[91] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 11 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, 125, f. 232r.

[92] The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, Florence, 4 Dicember 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 208r.

[93] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 213r/v.

members were to keep in central Italy 25,000 footsoldiers, 5,000 of whom were to be paid by the Florentine republic (which was supposed to contribute one-fifth of all expenses) and the rest by France and Venice. However, after the disaster of Rome, the situation of their respective troops in the Papal States stood quite low on the list of priorities of the *Serenissima* and of the *Cristianissimo*, which unlike Florence were involved on other fronts in the expensive war against the Empire, and above all were not under the direct threat of the Imperial army that had sacked the Holy City. As a result, the wages of the Venetian and of the French units stationed in central Italy arrived – when they arrived at all – with considerable delay and in instalments, causing widespread desertion and frequent mutinies.

At the beginning of September the Milanese ambassador wrote to his master that in Umbria the League could count on less than 8,000 footsoldiers, 200 men-at-arms and 400 light horsemen without artillery [94]. On 6 October, for instance, Pisani tried to persuade Martelli that his muster roll included 4,800 Italian footsoldiers and 1,500 Landsknechts, but only a few days earlier Florentine spies had reported to the *commissario* that Venice had *in facto* 800-1,000 Landsknechts, 2,200 Italian footsoldiers, less than 40 men-at-arms "destructi et ruinati" [completely worn out and ruined], 250 Albanian stradiots "e'quali non sono da factioni" [who are unfit for fighting] and 150 Italian light horsemen; at the same time the marquis of Saluzzo had under his command 1,400-1,500 Swiss, 400-500 footsoldiers of various nationalities, 240 men-at-arms "male et pessimamente ad ordine, ché non li pagono" [in dire condition, since they are not paid], and 250 light horsemen in similar condition, "da non fare molta factione" [not of much use in battle] [95].

The sneer he saw on the face of the *commissario* interrupted Pisani's exposition of the state of the Venetian troops, "et disse: 'Magnifico Commissario, voi nol crede vu' al corpo di così' et cominciò a giurare che gli era vero" [and said: 'Magnificent *Commissario*, you don't believe me, dammit!' and began to swear that it was the truth]. Martelli answered that if these figures were accurate, if one counted the Black Bands, the French troops and those of the *Serenissima* there were enough soldiers to proceed immediately to the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples. Undeterred, Pisani replied "Mo' – disse – io voglio che noi faziamo un pacto: pieré vo' i denari nostri et noi e' vostri, e ogniun paghi le compagnie l'uno de l'altro" [Well – he said – let us make a pact: you will take our money, and we yours, and each of us will pay the companies of the other] [96]. Eventually, the pair ended up by making fun of the whole thing, though their smiles were tight-lipped.

During a *consulta*, laughter and sneers were not an unusual occurrence, especially when the participants were still *ritti* [standing] and were no longer officially *seduti* [seated] around the table. On 8 November the atmosphere was decidedly informal, and, after the arrival of Federico da Bozzolo and of the marquis of Saluzzo, the members of the *consulta* began to speak about almost everything but the war. Laughing, *signor* Federico boasted that even though he could barely find one *scudo* among his possessions, he was creditor of two great republics, Florence and Venice, to the sum of one thousand and six hundred *scudi*. Martelli

[94] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVI, p. 49.

[95] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 224r.

[96] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 120r.

answered in the same tone that the Florentine republic would pay its share with the ransom money they would demand to free the marquis, who in his stead was indebted to Florence. "Et così ridendo ridendo il signor Federigo ci disse che gli faciavamo un gran torto" [and so laughing *signor* Federigo told us that we were wronging him] [97].

However, the atmosphere could also become dramatic: on 15 October, having sent everyone else out of the room, the duke of Urbino, "appoggiato a un muro" [leaning against a wall], addressed the *provveditore*, the *commissario*, the marquis of Saluzzo and Federico da Bozzolo, who listened to him "ritti ritti" [standing tall]. Francesco Maria asked them to act as witnesses of his words, whatever might happen to him in the near future: the Venetian *Signoria*, deceived by "male lingue" [maligners], doubted his loyalty, and his wife and children had recently been put in custody. It was the duke's firm intention to go to Venice, so that, had he in some way wronged his masters, they could punish the real culprit and not the innocent. The moment was crucial: the consequences for the already weakened army of the possible disgrace and departure of its captain general were unpredictable. Alvise Pisani tried to appease the duke's anger with "buone parole" [kind words], while the marquis and *signor* Federico, the other soldiers present at the *consulta*, showed their solidarity with the duke, saying to the *provveditore*: "Il Duca parla bene: noi altri stimiamo più l'honore che la propria vita" [the duke speaks well: we esteem honour more than our lives] [98].

Lorenzo Martelli saw the rift between the *provveditore* and the duke and took advantage of it, for during the following weeks the *commissario* succeeded in befriending Francesco Maria della Rovere. Even though it is difficult to say how much of the goodwill towards Florence displayed by the duke was sincere and not a tactic designed to put his Venetian masters under pressure, the meetings and fortuitous encounters between the duke and Martelli became increasingly frequent. The *commissario* assured the Ten that he was trying to win over the *capitano generale* and gain his confidences, taking good care to show that he was not doing it *ex arte*, that is artfully, but *ex corde* [heartily] [99]. It must be remembered that Venetian lack of confidence in the duke of Urbino had been caused by the failure of the siege of Milan (1526), not by the sack of Rome. The duke stressed the need to travel to Venice, and for this reason asked the Florentine Ten, through their *commissario in campo*, to replace their ambassador in that city, Alessandro de' Pazzi, on the grounds of incompatibility of character. Martelli's manoeuvres did not go unnoticed, for on 29 October, while the duke and the *commissario* were walking and talking together, the *provveditore* looked down at them from a nearby window, "et di continuo ci haveva gli occhi addosso" [and stared at us all the time] [100]. A few days later Martelli arrived at the table of the *consulta* at an early hour – on purpose before the *provveditore* – and there the duke confided to him that his problems in Venice had been caused by the false accusations of Francesco Guicciardini. A few moments later the *provveditore* appeared, "et vidi che e'non harebbe

[97] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Tuderto, 8 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, f. 396v.

[98] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 15 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 229v–230r.

[99] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 25 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 247r.

[100] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 216r.

voluto che fussi suto sì sollecito, et mi disse 'Commissario voi siete venuto a buon hora'" [and I saw that he didn't like me to be so solicitous, and said to me '*Commissario*, you have come very early'] [101].

Although of interest, the constant bickering between Venetian and Florentine commissioners was only one of the consequences of the precarious strategic and political situation of the League's army. After the sack of Rome and the surrender of the pope – and even more after Clement VII's statement of neutrality – the continued presence of the army on the lands of the Church had become not only a logistical nightmare, but also difficult to justify diplomatically. The *collegati* had consolidated their positions around Perugia, but so great was its *riputatione* that every hint of a move by the Imperial army northwards forced the commanders of the League to consider the only reasonable strategic alternative allowed by their few remaining forces: that is, a retreat towards either Siena or Florence. The Ten considered both these options unacceptable: they had paid a great deal to keep the war far from the city, and the duke's project of sending Federico da Bozzolo and Orazio Baglioni to oversee the reinforcement of Florence's fortresses provoked sharp criticism [102]. More prudent were the Ten's answers to the army's reiterated requests for pieces of ordnance, which could be taken only from the already depleted and obsolete Florentine artillery park.

The first request for artillery (two half cannons, two quarter cannons and two other pieces that could shoot balls of 6-9 *libbre* – probably two sakers) dated back to Girolami's period [103]. After criticising the Venetians and the French for months for their failure to pay their troops stationed in Umbria punctually, Florence could hardly deny the expensive support of its artillery without in turn appearing to default. At the same time, it was the total lack of ordnance that forced the army of the League to follow the purely defensive strategy desired by the republic, in spite of its danger. In fact, the only practical use that the French and the Venetian forces could have had for the Florentine artillery was as a *batteria* against the walls of Chiusi or even Siena. Employing the duke's own arguments against him, the Ten maintained that, in view of the overwhelming superiority of the Imperial army, a few pieces of artillery were unimportant and even dangerous, since they would slow down the League's forces if they had to retreat. In their turn, the duke, the *provveditore* and the marquis used their requests for Florentine artillery as a very effective political weapon. For on each occasion it forced the Ten to utter an embarrassing refusal, which in turn reduced the credibility of Florence's accusations against its allies, both at the *consulta* in Umbria and before the *Cristianissimo* in France.

The diplomatic isolation of Florence was partially counterbalanced by the fact that even the republic's unreliable allies had to acknowledge the decisive contribution of the Black Bands to the numerical and qualitative level of the League's army, and the crucial role played by Orazio Baglioni in securing the position of their forces while they were encamped in Umbria. The Baglioni family owes its unenviable reputation to the fact that Jacob Burckhardt utilised it as a negative example of those powerful Italian families constantly involved in bloody intestine feuds "whose rule never took the shape of an avowed despotism".

[101] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 331r.

[102] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 14 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 42, f. 179v.

Indeed, Orazio and Malatesta were both survivors of the infamous massacre of midsummer 1500 that almost wiped out their family and was so vividly described by the great Swiss historian in his famous book *The Civilization of Renaissance Italy* [104]. However, the figure Orazio has been completely overshadowed by that of his elder brother Malatesta, branded by Italian Risorgimento and Nationalist historiography as the traitor who handed over Florence, the last bastion of Italian freedom, to the Medici tyrants and to Charles V's 'barbaric' hordes in 1530. In consequence, Orazio has been either ignored, considered as a typical member of his family whose reign of terror in Perugia was mercifully short, or even mistaken for his brother. In fact, without the personal intervention of Orazio and the help of his partisans, Perugia would have fallen into Imperial hands in July 1527. By the beginning of August, the citizens of Perugia were so exasperated by the impositions of the League's troops stationed in their territory that only Orazio's presence prevented the city's *Consiglio Grande* from accepting the terms proposed by the Imperial generals. Pietro Squarcialupi, Florentine *Podestà* of Perugia, wrote that, albeit accused of excessive servility towards Florence and the duke of Urbino, Orazio managed to cool the Perugians' rage with a remarkable display of patience and cleverness. According to Squarcialupi, in Perugia the poor *signore* Oratio was behaving like "un Cesare" [a Caesar], and fully deserved the Ten's compliments and benevolence [105]. It was in this delicate political and military situation that Orazio Baglioni committed the crime most frequently associated with his name.

In June 1527 Orazio had solemnly promised to make peace with Gentile and his followers, but, in fact, he had never really set aside his desire for vendetta. Maybe the Medici – who had had his father arrested, tortured and then executed – were beyond his reach, but the people who had taken advantage of Giampaolo Baglioni's death were not. It was relatively easy for Orazio to persuade the leaders of the League's army that the situation would be less precarious if Perugia were completely in the hands of the "veri Baglioni" [real Baglioni] (i.e. of the sons of Giampaolo) and if Gentile and his partisans were removed from the picture. It will remain forever unknown whether the duke of Urbino and his generals really believed Orazio's assurance that Gentile and his followers were plotting to open Perugia's gates to the Imperial troops, or if instead they just preferred to believe the latter for their own convenience. On the night of 3 August 1527, Gentile was first arrested in Perugia by Federico Gonzaga, who had entered the city at the head of his troops, and then killed by Gonzaga's Corsican infantrymen along with two of his nephews: the Prothonotary Apostolical Fileno and Annibale Baglioni [106]. Another Baglioni, Galeotto (son of Grifonetto Baglioni, one of the organizers of the 1500 conspiracy), was instead killed directly by Orazio as he tried to reach the League's camp escorted by the duke's soldiers and protected by the duke's word. As would be expected, these 'excellent murders' were fol-

[103] Raffaele Girolami to the Ten, Assisi, 10 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 123, f. 432v.

[104] J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance Italy*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 36-39; on the Baglioni seigniory see also L. de Baglion, *Pérouse et les Baglioni*, Paris, Emile-Paul, 1909, and A. Baglioni, *I Baglioni*, Florence, L.S. Olschki, 1964.

[105] Pietro Squarcialupi to the Ten, Perugia, 5 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 123, f. 73r.

[106] *Ibid.*, ff. 73v-74r; Burckhardt, *The Civilization*, cit., pp. 38-39; Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLIX, p. 617; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., vol. III, pp. 1879-1880; de Baglion, *Pérouse et les Baglioni*, cit., pp. 285-288.

lowed, in Perugia and in the nearby *ville*, by a wave of summary executions and imprisonments of Gentile's partisans.

The duke of Urbino protested (or at least claimed to protest) against the death of Galeotto, but like the various leaders of the League's army and the Florentine leadership, he took advantage of the deaths of Gentile and his nephews – "un atto degno di eterna infamia" [an eternally infamous act], remarked Francesco Guicciardini – and turned a blind eye to Orazio's subsequent initiatives. Eventually, whether this was the effect hoped for right from the very start or just a result of the vengeful temper of the Perugian *condottiere*, Orazio's heavy-handed rule paved the way to the return of Malatesta who, after being granted a long leave by his Venetian masters (officially for health reasons) entered Perugia on 2 September 1527, warmly welcomed by an exasperated populace. After Orazio had done the dirty work, Malatesta could well afford to forgive many of his surviving opponents, play the part of the 'moderate' and present himself as the man to guarantee a return to peace and order after so much bloodshed.

Loyal as ever to humanistic moral canons when it came to judging a soldier's life and worth, Benedetto Varchi described Orazio as a valiant combatant and a "uomo d'incredibile animosità e gagliardia" [man of incredible courage and strength], but also as "sanguinolento, crudele e vendicativo sopra modo" [exceedingly bloodthirsty, cruel and vengeful] [107]. However, although Varchi was not alone in his judgement and the Perugian *condottiere* himself certainly preferred to be feared more than loved, Orazio was something more of a brutal henchman.

Nobody could become a renowned infantry commander and a successful military entrepreneur without having to his credit something more than great personal courage and a violent character, just as no one could survive three years of prison in Castel Sant'Angelo and come through in the way that he did without knowing how to remain calm and how to practice the art of compromise and negotiaton. Furthermore, one must consider that he had rid himself of Gentile and his nephews indirectly, getting others to kill in his place. This poorly matches the image of the thug anxious to soil his hands with the blood of his rivals. Furthermore, moral considerations apart, as a *condottiere* Orazio was more than a fierce combatant: he was a competent and resolute commander who was loyal and consistent towards his masters to such a point that the wavering and scheming Clement VII had considered his constancy among his defects [108]. During the sessions of the *consulta* Orazio acted and spoke very lucidly, always assuring his support to the otherwise isolated Martelli. The relationship between Orazio and the marquis of Saluzzo – who, according to Martelli, was "un poco ardente alla Franzese" [a little fiery *a la française*] – mirrored that between Florence and the marquis, being particularly tense. On more than one occasion, Michele Antonio openly provoked Orazio, who always managed to remain calm. Whether a murderer or a Caesar, Orazio was instrumental in Florence's strategy.

Without Orazio's loans to the marquis and to Federico da Bozzolo, the Swiss troops in Umbria would have disbanded long before Lautrec's arrival, and the same could be said of

[107] Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, p. 270.

[108] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci (near Perugia), 14 Dicember 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 510r.

the French *lances* of heavy cavalry which for four months plagued the *ville* of Perugia's *contado* with their exorbitant requests. When *provveditore* Pisani asked him to oblige the municipality of Perugia (a papal fief) to write a letter which asked Clement VII to concede the title of papal governor of the *legatione* of the city to his son Cardinal Francesco, Orazio agreed without further ado. When the *commissario* warned him about the future implications of such a choice, the *condottiere* replied that it mattered little who held that benefice. "Sievi chi vuole" [whoever wants it may have it], answered Orazio; what the despised "preti" [priests] wanted had no real relevance. What really mattered to the younger son of Giampaolo Baglioni was that the Florentines should remain free [109] and that the axis of the Medici power linking Florence and Rome, which was holding Perugia in a vicelike grip, should be broken.

By mid-October 1527, the army of the League had regained enough confidence to move its quarters from Perugia's *contado* to Todi's, nearer to Rome along the Tiber valley, and, while doing this, to launch a daring raid deep inside the territory controlled by the enemy against the Imperial light cavalry in Monterotondo (approximately twenty kilometers from Rome – see Appendix 3). Even though the attacking forces were discovered before reaching their objective, and the undertaking proved a failure, it revealed the state of weakness of the Imperial army. In the Holy City, the bad feelings between the soldiers of the various *nationi* that composed the Imperial host, and those between the soldiers and their commanders, remained strong and prevented the host from leaving the plague-ridden city or undertaking any important initiative. At this point the control of Philibert de Châlon (1502-1530), prince of Orange and successor to the duke of Bourbon as captain general of the Imperial army, over his troops was largely nominal, and negotiations between the Imperial representatives and the pope over the financial and political conditions for the release of such an embarrassing hostage proceeded slowly [110]. At the same time, Clement VII was already starting to make his voice heard and his influence felt outside his prison.

On return from the attack against Monterotondo, the Florentine forces were quartered in Montefalco, as planned, but already before the end of the month in the *consulta* there were negotiations for their transfer to Deruta (more or less halfway between Perugia and Todi). The partition of the new territory and its resources caused a wave of harsh debates in the *consulta* as the various members struggled to secure for themselves the richer and safer zones around Todi, where the sessions of the League's council were held. The transfer of the Black Bands' *piazza* from Montefalco to Deruta was one of the main issues, as Martelli tried to prevent his colleagues from giving the leftovers once again to the Florentine troops. According to the *commissario*, the other members of the *consulta* had already come to an agreement with the *castella* around Todi, and were trying to divert the Black Bands to Deruta, where the countryside had already been "tutto assassinato" [completely assassinated] during the previous summer and there was no fodder within a radius of six miles. Once more, the Florentine commissioner found himself isolated: "... è una festa il facto loro. Sonsi ristretti insieme. Vogliono quel che vogliono, talmente che è una passione et, quid

[109] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 349v.

[110] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1894-1897.

peius est, un pericolo grandissimo. Ma Idio ci aiuta" [... this is a party to them. They have combined forces. They want what they want, in such a way that it's a passion and, what is worse, it's a grave danger. But God is helping us] [111].

The discussion of this topic continued session after session, and, to quote Lorenzo Martelli's joke, had he and Orazio not found in Todi a *spetiale* [apothecary] who sold them a bit of patience, they could never have endured it: "fu una festa bella: quando volevano et quando non volevano" [it was quite a gathering: sometimes they wanted something, sometimes they didn't] [112]. In reaction Florence tightened its pursestrings, and the *commissario* reassured the Ten that in the *consulta* "belle sberrettate, risi et inchini io ne do loro, ma innanzi che mi cavino un quattrino di mano saranno negromanti, et non ciurmadori" [hat doffing, smiles and bows I give them, but before getting a penny out of me, they will have to be wizards rather than mere swindlers] [113]. It is worth noticing that, unlike the other military and civilian leaders of the army of the League, Lorenzo Martelli had always refused to reside in comfort in Todi and remained with the Black Bands, shuttling continuously between Todi, Montefalco and Elci. It was a hard life: when Martelli asked the Ten to send a new chancellor, he insisted that they send a young and healthy one, since "qui si sta in su la paglia" [here we sleep on hay] [114].

In the end (2 December), the Bands were not sent to Deruta but quartered in various castles around Todi as requested by Martelli, even though the village of Vepri, assigned to Azzo da Casalpò, refused to admit the company that had caused the sack of Montefalco (see Appendix 3) inside its walls. This minor success, however, was overshadowed on the same day by news of the arrival in the town of Narni of a group of very important hostages that had escaped from Rome a few days before. Among the hostages, who were now 'guests' of Pandolfo Puccini (a captain of the Black Bands whose company was garrisoned in Narni), were some of the most influential partisans of the Medici in Florence and in Rome: Jacopo Salviati (1469-1534; father-in-law of Giovanni de' Medici), Lorenzo Ridolfi, the bishop of Pisa Onofrio Bartolini, the bishop of Pistoia Antonio Pucci, the bishop of Verona and apostolic datary Giovan Matteo Giberti. Having escaped from the Imperialist clutches in Rome only to fall in the hands of the forces of the Florentine republic, the runaway hostages had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire, and the possibility that they could be sent directly to Florence as prisoners caused a serious outcry against the *commissario*, who refused to order Puccini to let Salviati and the others go without first asking the Ten for instructions. Todi's cathedral, where Lorenzo Martelli had just heard Mass with the duke, became the scene of a mighty "battaglia di maledetto senno" [battle of cursed wit] between the *commissario* and the *provveditore*, who threw in Martelli's face the fact that one of the basic assumptions of the League was the liberation of the pope. The *commissario* denied ever having said that the fugitives were now Puccini's prisoners. The situation then deteriorated rapidly when the marquis of Saluzzo and Federico da Bozzolo joined the dis-

[111] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 213r.

[112] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 348v.

[113] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 14 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 339r.

[114] *Ibid.*, f. 341r.

cussion. The choleric marquis attacked Martelli frontally: "Come! Non siamo noi qui per liberare il Papa? Et monsignor di Lautrech non viene per altro?" [What! Aren't we here to liberate the pope? Isn't *monsignor* Lautrec here for no other reason?]. Federigo da Bozzolo decided on a different approach and at the beginning sided with the *commissario*, but from the ironical smile that appeared on Martelli's lips he saw that his efforts to deceive the Florentine were pointless. Filled with anger, *signor* Federigo "cominciossi ad versare più terribilmente del mondo con parole molto mordaci" [started to inveigh in the most terrible way spitting out very cutting words], revealing his desire – which was also everybody else's real desire – to save Jacopo Salviati from the clutches of the Florentine republic and please the pope. The marquis of Saluzzo and Federico da Bozzolo threatened to go themselves to free the hostages, whatever the *commissario*'s opinion. Alvise Pisani, seeing that things were going too far, mediated a solution with Lorenzo Martelli: since Florence did not consider them as prisoners, Salviati and the others were to be escorted to Todi and stay there at the League's disposal. However, the marquis and Federigo were so eager to show their concern for the pope's cause that they decided that it was up to them to free the hostages, going to Narni. "Per una giostra" [As a joust], wrote eventually Lorenzo Martelli, "io non vidi mai la più bella" [I have never seen a finer one] [115].

In the hands of the Imperial army remained Cardinal Pisani, whose father, *provveditore* Alvise Pisani, was worried about possible reprisals by the Landsknechts. What worried Martelli was, by contrast, Jacopo Salviati's "cervello di gatta" [devious mind], that would soon be free to plot against the Florentine republic [116]. Quite understandably, the *commissario* had no love for Salviati. Only a few days earlier he had announced to the Ten that he was still hostage of the Landsknechts in Rome, chained together with the bishop of Pistoia, adding, probably with a measure of personal satisfaction, "che Jacopo haveva gran fluxo et che ogni volta che haveva andar del corpo si haveva a menar seco il vescovo di Pistoia con chi è in coppia" [that Jacopo was badly suffering from dysentery, and that every time he had to use the bathroom he had to take along the bishop of Pistoia, who is chained to him] [117]. In the days following the debate in the cathedral the rumours about the pope's liberation multiplied, and eventually the official confirmation arrived from Florence: on 8 December, after 'escaping' from Rome in disguise, Clement VII had entered Orvieto, escorted by the Imperial commander Luigi Gonzaga. However, he had not been allowed to leave Rome by Charles V's generals and emissaries without first making significant financial and strategic concessions to the Empire and promising that he would remain neutral for the rest of the war.

The liberation of the pope finally confronted Florence with the intrinsic contradiction of being a member of a League that had among its main objectives the restoration to power of the republic's greatest enemy. This considerably weakened the position of Lorenzo Martelli. One after another, all the members of the *consulta* went, or at least expressed their desire to go, to Orvieto to pay homage to Clement VII and persuade him to support the cause of the

[115] The *commissario* used to call 'giostre' (jousts) his harsh discussions with Federico da Bozzolo and the other members of the Consulta. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 2 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 483r/v. The punctuation marks of Saluzzo's answer are mine.

[116] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 6 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 486r.

[117] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 23 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 369v

League openly. Martelli and Orazio Baglioni, however, refused to be party to this. In his constant search for political weak points that could be turned to his advantage during the *consulta*, the Venetian *provveditore* used the *commissario*'s refusal to make him appear unreasonably uncompromising. And Martelli was particularly annoyed by Pisani's persistent requests that he should go to Orvieto "a mordere" [to bite] the pope's feet [118]. Moreover, since he and the Black Bands had occupied the *castella* around Todi, and not the Deruta area as they were meant to do, Martelli had to put up with all kinds of complaints about the damage caused by the Florentine troops. The *commissario* considered those complaints preposterous and disingenuous: in just a few hours the Venetian soldiers used to accomplish what their Florentine colleagues did in weeks, "et se noi azoppiamo una gallina ne va il fumo a l'aria" [and if we lame a hen a ruckus ensues] [119]. There was a lot of talk, especially in Orvieto, about what Azzo da Casalpò and his men were doing to Vepri, but no one remembered the poor town of Bevagna which the Venetian troops had turned into a brothel, not even sparing its nunneries [120]. To drive home his point of view to the duke of Urbino, Martelli referred to a Florentine *novella* [tale] in which Lorenzo de' Medici 'sentenced' Bartolino de' Daldi to Heaven and Antonio Vettori to Hell, even though they were guilty of the same sin of gluttony, simply because Bartolino used to eat at Lorenzo's table [121].

On 16 December a young *cameriere* of the pope arrived in the League's camp and, after the *consulta*, addressed the *provveditore*, asking for further instructions. Noticing that Martelli was near, Pisani tried to present him to the *cameriere*, asking the youth to address the *commissario*. The cold and arrogant answer the *cameriere* gave on behalf of his master was: "Il Papa dice che non ha ad fare nulla co' Fiorentini" [the pope says he has nothing to do with the Florentines]. "Io" wrote Martelli "guardai in viso el proveditore, che veramente lo vidi cambiare" [I looked the *provveditore* in the face, and saw it drastically change]. Of course, Pisani was not shocked by what those hostile words meant for Florence, but by what they meant for him personally after being plainly uttered in Martelli's presence, since they meant that he could no longer exploit the *commissario*'s refusal to go to Orvieto.

Orazio's nights, however, were plagued by the thought of how important for his future it would be to go, or not to go, to Orvieto. For if the Perugian *condottiere* remained staunchly loyal to Florence and did not go to kiss Clement VII's feet, he would expose himself to the pope's wrath. Moreover, those were the last days in which Clement VII was not strong enough to spurn an agreement with Gentile Baglioni's murderer. When Orazio asked the *commissario* for a substantial compensation for the considerable trouble that he was facing in the present (and for the dangers he would have to face in the future) by not going to Orvieto, Martelli encouraged him to follow Florence's line of action. After much hesitation Orazio eventually decided to accept this advice [122].

[118] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 14 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 509r. It must be said that Pisani himself was having problems: a few days before, he had been taken hostage by angry Corsican soldiers in Venetian service, who threatened to make him run the gauntlet if they did not receive their arrears of wages.

[119] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 9 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 498v.

[120] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 16 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 514v.

[121] *Ibid.*, f. 516r.

[122] *Ibid.*, f. 514v.

The session of the *consulta* held on 18 December began in a very relaxed atmosphere. In fact, as the duke of Urbino pointed out, it seemed a "veglia" [wake] rather than a council: there were many people *ritti* [standing around], engaged in "cianciare di molte cose" [chatting about many things] and in "fare inchini et baciamenti" [bowing and kissing the hands of] some friends of the marquis who had just arrived from Lombardy. When eventually the duke had chairs brought in, thus announcing the opening of the *consulta*, those without a chair left the room. From the start, the *commissario* appeared isolated: the liberation of the pope, his declaration of neutrality and his growing influence had upset a balance that was already delicate. The duke of Urbino and *signor* Federico stressed the need to leave the lands of the Papal States in order to respect the pope's neutrality. Since Florence had always rejected the idea of moving the League's camp to Sienese territory, and since it was now too late to do so anyway, the only option left was to withdraw it to Florentine territory. "In questo" [at that point] writes Martelli "balzò drento quel cameriere del Papa" [all of a sudden that *cameriere* of the pope appeared], announcing the arrival of Ottavio da Cesis, *chierico di camera* [chamber cleric] of Clement VII, who had brought two important papal briefs. As *messer* Ottavio entered the room the already tense atmosphere suddenly became stifling. With one voice, the *provveditore* and Federico da Bozzolo said that on this occasion there was no time to ask Florence for instructions. At this point, Orazio discreetly intimated to Martelli that they should leave the room before the others could 'level' the briefs at them, for these probably contained Clement VII's orders that they leave the Papal States. In a frantic search for an excuse to gain precious time, the *commissario* suddenly noticed that the *scesa* [descent] of catarrh that had been plaguing one of his shoulders had grown acute again, so he begged to be excused and left the room in a hurry, slipping out of the trap. "Horatio restò, ché non si potette spaniare" [Orazio remained, not being able to excuse himself]. Later on, Orazio reported that Ottavio in the end had not broken the seals of the briefs, maybe thanks to Martelli's absence, or perhaps because of Orazio's ominous presence [123].

The morning after, since Martelli was not around, the marquis and Federico continually insisted to the duke of Urbino that the Florentine troops should leave the lands of the Church immediately, thereby prompting an angry answer of Francesco Maria della Rovere: "Et se e'non si volessino partire, haremo noi per questo ad venire con loro ad l'arme?" [And if they do not want to leave, would we therefore have to engage them in a battle?]. When Lorenzo Martelli was summoned once more to the table of the *consulta*, he answered that he was still suffering from the *scesa*. For his part, Orazio Baglioni was afraid that all those discussions were just a ruse to send him far from Perugia and deprive him of his *stato*, so he gave the *commissario* full backing.

On 19 December, the duke, Alvise Pisani and Ottavio da Cesis went to visit Lorenzo Martelli, who received them in his room with a *sciugatoietto* [towel] wrapped around his neck, presumably to relieve the sufferings caused by the painful *scesa*. Ottavio assured the *commissario* that the pope trusted him and considered him a *homo da bene*, but also asked him to remove the Florentine troops from around Todi. According to Martelli Ottavio

[123] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 18 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 526v.

"parlò assai honestamente" [spoke quite frankly] but his words were threatening. In fact, the *chierico di camera* was trying to gloss over the untimely words of the *cameriere*, whom he called a "pazerello" [madcap], but at the same time he did not refrain from criticism and pronounced more than one "parola pugnente" [stinging word], especially against the Florentine forces. Eventually Orazio and the duke left the room to discuss military issues, and Lorenzo Martelli remained alone with Ottavio. After "mille belle parole" [much flattery], the *chierico* revealed to the *commissario* that he was the son of messer Agnolo da Cesis, a friend of Lorenzo's brother (maybe Giovanfrancesco Martelli), and dismissed the *cameriere*'s blunder as personal and unconnected with the *commissione* given to the young man by the pope. It is difficult to tell how Clement VII had selected the bearer of his *brevi*, or even if he had deliberately chosen someone who could boast, at some level, a connection with Lorenzo Martelli, in order to try to influence him. The pope had certainly not forgotten that he still had in his hands something that could interest the *commissario*. After all his "belle parole" [flattery], *messer* Ottavio "m'entrò in mio figlio" [began to speak of my son] [124].

Since his arrest in 1522 for his involvement in the *congiura* [conspiracy] of the Orti Oricellari, Niccolò di Lorenzo Martelli had been held prisoner in the fortress of Civitavecchia. In August 1527, Niccolò wrote to the Ten, asking them to intervene with Andrea Doria, who had occupied Civitavecchia (to persuade Clement VII to give him his arrear wages) and was the current holder of the *cedola* [coupon] of two hundred and fifty *scudi* Niccolò was supposed to pay to refund the expenses of his own captivity. However, Niccolò himself reported that for the last year he had been prisoner of Bartolomeo della Valle, a Florentine citizen and a "sviscerato servitore della casa de' Medici" [ardent servant of the house of Medici], who had kept him in chains, naked and barefoot like "el più vil homo del mondo" [like the basest man on earth]. From the depths of the papal dungeons Niccolò Martelli argued obstinately that Bartolomeo could not have spent more than thirty *scudi* [125].

"Habbiate fede" said Ottavio "et ricordatevi che il papa ha nome Clemente, et userà clementia" [Have faith, and remember that the pope's name is Clement, and he will be clement]. Wounded to the quick, the *commissario* replied sharply that, up to that day, he had never seen any evidence of Clement's clemency, and that he preferred "che lui havesse questo charico con tutto il mondo, che rihavere il mio figlio" [that the pope should carry this blame before the world rather than have my son back]. This rebuked, the *chierico* took his leave, after bowing and doffing his hat a thousand times [126].

Determined to obstruct the works of the *consulta* as much as possible, in the following days Martelli continued to play the role of the sick man, lying on his 'political' bed far from Todi. On 21 December, "con arte di malattia et con ciurmeria di parole" [thanks to the pretence of illness and words of deceit] [127], the Black Bands were still in Umbria and were not

[124] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 19 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 519r/v.

[125] Niccolò Martelli to the Ten, Civitavecchia, 10 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 123, f. 155r.

[126] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 19 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, ff. 519v-520r.

[127] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 21 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 521v.

heading towards Tuscany. On 23 December, however, while Martelli pleaded that he was taking pills and could not ride, the "signori da Todi" could, so the whole *consulta* visited the *commissario*'s quarters in Elci. Faced with the requests of those who were all too eager to please Clement VII by leaving the Papal State, Martelli countered them with Florence's strategic guidelines. He distrusted the pope [128] and his vague promises, and suggested that the army of the League should set up a line of defence around Todi, where it could receive logistical support from both Perugia and the Florentine state. In fact, what really plagued the *commissario* was not the *scesa* but the complete lack of news and instructions from Florence, where the new Ten were about to be appointed.

Eventually Martelli's passive resistance and delaying tactics managed to appease the pro-papal inclinations of the other members of the *consulta*. In vain they had tried everything to change his and Orazio's mind: "commissari di Papa, brevi, lettere loro di fuocho, parole efficacissime, et ultimo, ogni duo giorni, 3 volte alla fila venire qui in persona tutti" [papal *commissarii*, briefs, fiery letters, persuasive arguments, and, in the end, coming here in person, all together, every two days on three consecutive occasions]. The 'battle' fought on 23 December had been, apparently, the last, and still the seals of the papal *brevi* – that dreaded "bavalischio" [basilisk], as Martelli called them – were intact [129]. The monster could still come out of its den during one of the future debates, but the *commissario* had already asked *messer* Ottavio twice to read the *brevi*, and the *chierico* had refused to do so. It is possible that the briefs were, in fact, just a bluff, designed to sound out the willingness of the various members of the *consulta* to listen to the pope and, if possible, to make Martelli (i.e. Florence) flinch. On 29 December the *commissario* made his recovery official by going to Todi to visit the duke of Urbino, who warmly welcomed him: "Commissario, voi siate el ben guarito" [*Commissario*, I am glad to see you have recovered] and added "se voi pure havete havuto male" [if you were ill in the first place] [130].

Federico da Bozzolo, on the other hand, was genuinely ill, and he died in Todi a few days after the *commissario*'s recovery. As a kind of post-mortem examination revealed, he had been suffering from internal bleeding since May, when his horse had fallen on him during the last failed attempt to free the pope immediately after the fall of Rome. However, the Ten did not have to choke back their tears: "Il signor Federigo si morì. Il Christianissimo n'ha fatto perdita, et essendosi dimostrato dopo la liberatione del papa nimico nostro, non ci pare havere perso niente" [*Signor* Federigo has died. It is a loss for the Most Christian King, and having shown himself our enemy after the liberation of the pope, we believe we have lost nothing] [131]. With Federico's death, the *consulta* lost one of its more active members, but by the end of December the days of battles and 'jousts' fought around the *tavola* were already at an end. The main reason for the extended stay of the army of the League in Umbria, notwithstanding all its failures and shortcomings, was the fact that all the *collegati* (and in particular Florence) found it useful to keep at least a body of covering troops

[128] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 23 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f 543v.

[129] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 25 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 539r.

[130] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 28 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 531r.

[131] The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, Florence, 2 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 43, f. 57v.

between them and the 'devil's army' that occupied Rome, while the League revised its priorities and aims and assembled a new, and much larger, army in northern Italy. As Lautrec's host started its slow march towards southern Italy the roles were exchanged, for then it was the Imperial army that was forced to adopt a defensive stance to protect the emperor's Aragonese inheritance. When that veritable sword of Damocles – the Imperial advance northwards – was removed, the *consulta* effectively lost its main *raison d'être* and the different components of the army began to operate separately, readying themselves to join the army of Lautrec, and to take part in the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples.

From December 1527 onwards, Lorenzo Martelli concentrated his attention on the other sore point of his already troubled mandate as *commissario in campo*; that is, on finding a way to curb the magnificent, yet troublesome, gift that the republic had inherited from the Medici regime: the Black Bands.

3. The 'Reformation' of a Fighting Force

"Noi vogliamo pure chiamare questa una militia. Io dico che l'è una confusione... ma io so che fino in inferno è ordine et iustitia" [132].

Lorenzo Martelli on the Black Bands

In spite of their reputation, the Black Bands had no better fortune than other less famous Italian infantry units of that period, for no accurate and detailed description of them – either narrative or iconographic – has ever emerged. In Italy the description of the everyday life of infantry troops never became a successful genre. By contrast with their Swiss and German colleagues of the first half of the sixteenth century, Italian men of letters and artists examined the rank and file for what they did, and not for what they were. To get a rough idea of what the Black Bands were like, we must assemble occasional descriptions and details mentioned almost en passant by people who were indirectly interested in them.

The footsoldiers of the 1520s did not wear regimental uniforms of any sort; the soldiers of the late Giovanni were no exception, apart from their ostentatious mourning garb. Italian soldiers generally dressed according to their means and to their luck (Figure 13), combining rags with new clothes and sometimes even luxury articles acquired or plundered here and there, but following the civilian fashion of the period, with a few modifications and additions necessitated by the harshness of military life. An indication, albeit an indirect one, of the dress of the Black Bands' soldiers is given by their former sergeant-major Giovambattista Gotti who, in his *instructione* of 1533 for the men of the *legione Feltria* [Feltrian Legion], required every *legionario* to wear – in addition to common clothing such as shirt and shoes, which he does not mention – a *giubbone* [doublet] and a pair of *calze* [hose] made either of silk or *panno* [cloth] and a leather *coletto* [buff coat] [133], which alone offered some protection from swordcuts and served as padding if worn under the corselet. For sure, being Italians, the soldiers of the Black Bands were more conventionally and soberly dressed than the average unit of Landsknechts, with their peacock feathers and flamboyant slashed dresses, and lacked their bewildering appearance. However, the funereal look permanently adopted by the 'orphans' of the Great Devil Giovanni never failed to impress the people who saw them. The soldiers wore black sashes and dressed prevalently in black; and because of the colour of their flags the companies of the Black Bands were sometimes referred to as *bandiere nere* [black flags]. According to some testimonies their mourning included also the rest of their military paraphernalia, such as armour (though this were quite often burnished merely to reduce maintenance – Figure 14), drums and so on. The already dismal general effect was reinforced and made particularly sinister by a generous display of diabolical figures, a constant symbolism of the unit already during *signor* Giovanni's lifetime: all the companies had devils embroidered on their black flags,

[132] "We may call this a military unit. I say that it's just a mess... but I know that even in Hell there is order and justice..."

[133] BOP, Fondo dei Mss. Oliveriani, 434, XII, f. 261r.

Figure 13
Pontormo, *Portrait of a Halberdier*, 1529-1530 (The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles © The J. Paul Getty Museum).
A young Florentine (probably Francesco di Giovanni Guardi), painted by Pontormo at the time of the siege of Florence "in abito di soldato" [in the costume of a soldier], elegantly dressed with beret, padded doublet, slashed breech-hose, and armed with halberd and sword.

Figure 14
Paris Bordon, *Portrait of a Man in Armour with Two Pages*, c. 1550 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1973-311-1).
An Italian infantry commander (perhaps the Milanese patrician Carlo da Rho - died 1559) is being helped to put on the last pieces of his burnished corselet before taking his position at the head of his troops (in the background) who await him aligned for battle.

and some of the captains had even "adosso dipinti" [painted on them] four devils and the blasphemous *motto* "In dispecto tuo Christo" [In spite of you, Christ] [134]. It is therefore not surprising that the impressionable papal historian Paolo Giovio, after witnessing a review of the impressive-looking veteran *diavoli* [devils] of Lucantonio Cuppano's *colonnello* in 1527 (see Appendix 1), ended up exclaiming "Oh che visi, oh che barbe, che celate, che arcobusi, che sguardi, che passi!" [O what faces, what beards, what sallets, what arquebuses, what expressions, what steps!] [135].

[134] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 14 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 344r. Unfortunately, in Italian the words "addosso dipinti" lay themselves open to misinterpretation, so it is not clear if the devils and the *motto* were actually 'painted' on armours (armours were sometimes covered with a protective coat of black paint for maintenance – a process decidedly more simple and economic than burnishing) or clothes, or even tattooed on the bodies of the soldiers themselves.

[135] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLIV, pp. 99-105.

Unfortunately, the picture is no more detailed in other respects either. Owing first to their stubborn refusal to be given a new leader and to be inspected, and then to the political earthquake caused by the sack of Rome, very little is known about what was possibly the most interesting period of the life of the Black Bands – that from December 1526 to June 1527. For several months after the death of Giovanni the Black Bands had remained out of control as well as out of the sight of *messer* Francesco Guicciardini, but as Bourbon's army marched on Florence the dignified papal lieutenant (and Florentine patrician) finally set aside his pride and met in Bologna with the *unione* of the captains of the Black Bands, persuading them to follow the other papal forces to Tuscany, where they arrived at the end of April 1527. As they marched through the friendly Florentine territory which they were supposed to defend, the Black Bands lived up to their already sinister fame, behaving "pezo che Turchi. Hanno sachizato in Valdarno tre castelli di fiorentini, et forzato femene, et fatto altre cose crudelissime" [136] [worse than Turks. In the Valdarno they have sacked three Florentine villages, raped women and perpetrated other very cruel things].

A reorganization aimed at breaking up the *unione* of the captains was attempted, or at least planned, at the beginning of May: of the twelve companies which at that moment composed them, seven were to be placed under the command of Giovanni's half-nephew and *allievo* Pier Maria de' Rossi [137] (1502-1547) and three under that of Azzo da Correggio (?-1528), Count of Casalpò (about whom more will be said in this section). The two remaining ones, made up of Corsicans which refused to follow a commander who was not already experienced and renowned [138], were probably to be given to Paolo Luzzasco (?-1555), a former associate of Giovanni de' Medici [139] who had recently arrived in the camp of the League and was considered a probable candidate to succeed the late 'Great Devil' as leader of the papal-Florentine infantry. However, the announcements of these provisions caused widespread discontent among the Black Bands, who threatened to detach themselves once again from the army of the League [140] and, in light of what occurred subsequently, these provisions remained largely unenforced.

The capture of the pope and the consequent reduction of the anti-Medici regime in Florence to reduce their own financial involvement, paying only 4,000 infantrymen,

[136] *Ibid.*, XLV, p. 75.

[137] According to Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, younger brother of Pier Maria, on his deathbed Giovanni had named this latter as his successor in command of his troops, but Clement VII, always hostile to that branch of the Rossi family, vetoed the decision. Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, cit., p. 94.

[138] Benedetto Agnello to the marquis of Mantua, 3 May 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 874, f. 96r/v.

[139] Every biography of Giovanni de' Medici contains the famous episode in which the young bold *condottiere*, seeing Luzzasco a prisoner of a group of Venetian cavalrymen, turned his horse and charged at them almost alone, brandishing his mace and shouting like a madman, and eventually freeing his friend (Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, p. 48). Though the two parted company in 1522 as bitter rivals, Luzzasco is generally considered to have been Giovanni's best lieutenant (though he later became his personal enemy), though the actual hierarchical relationship between the two at the beginning of the Great Devil's career is unclear. Luzzasco came to be regarded as one of the finest *condottieri* of his time, and even Giovangirolamo de' Rossi had to admit that their parting was a turning point in the life of Giovanni, who had to show that he had 'made' his former associate, and not the contrary; *ibid.*, p. 106.

[140] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLV, pp. 41, 66.

brought about a need to start over. Acting quickly and in a state of dire need, the Florentine republic acquired to its service the Black Bands as a whole, using them as a 'container' in which to channel and organize what little was left of the other formerly papal infantry units and all the soldiers and officers of the late *signor* Giovanni who were willing to serve Florence. As soon as he was freed (on 23 May 1527), Florence hired and gave a company to Giovanni's most trusted Captain Lucantonio Cuppano, who had been captured by the Imperialists in the early phases of the sack of Rome (see Appendix 1). Florence also sent to the camp of the League two newly-recruited companies of infantry led by another former captain of the infantry of *signor* Giovanni, the Florentine Pandolfo Puccini (?-1528), who had eagerly offered his services to the new regime. Giovanni probably would not have approved of the decision of his men to enter the service of a regime that was openly hostile to the main branch of his family, but the soldiers of the Black Bands were professional mercenaries who had been utterly faithful to him [141], not to the Medici in general: the war went on, the Florentine republic was an enemy of those who had killed *signor* Giovanni, and money had to come from somewhere.

By the end of July, when the Black Bands were assuming their 'definitive' formation (Table 1), Azzo da Casalpò figured on the Florentine payroll only as one of the fifteen captains of the Black Bands; Pier Maria de' Rossi had defected to the Imperial camp [142], while Paolo Luzzasco had returned to northern Italy, disappointed by the fact that Orazio Baglioni had been preferred over him as captain general of the Florentine infantry.

The exact terms of the *unione* are unknown, and can only be partially inferred from a thorough analysis of the troublesome relationship between the Black Bands, Florence and Orazio Baglioni. In the absence of a 'voice' speaking from within the ranks of the Bands, in this task we are once more assisted by Lorenzo Martelli's prodigality of detail, which in many ways counterbalanced (albeit involuntarily) the lack of consideration shown by his Florentine masters for aspects of the military world that were dismissed as simple sedition.

Examples of infantry units that contested the authority of their employers and, instead of simply disbanding, 'ruled' themselves autonomously by electing their own representatives and, in some cases, even their officers, were not unknown in the Italian Wars. However, it was a phenomenon that usually involved Swiss or Landsknechts, that is troops that during the 1520s had still a strong representative and assembly system and a marked egalitarian streak, which came about when the assembly of soldiers considered that they were in some way victims of a 'breach of contract' on the part of the employer. There was no tradition of communal decision in Italian society comparable to that of the German areas. The state of 'organized sedition' of the Black Bands did not originate from a breach of contract, and was not prompted and conducted by the lower ranks, but rather by the intermediate ranks of Giovanni's military enterprise: the captains of the various companies who, by constituting their *unione* and acting as a sort of 'board of directors', replaced – at least in part – their

[141] According to Benedetto Varchi the Black Bands clamoured repeatedly to have Cosimo as their new leader and master. Fortunately for the future duke of Florence, Maria Salviati was too sensible a woman and mother to send her only child to the wars. Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, p. 123

[142] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLV, p. 278; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., vol. III, p. 1865.

Table 1. The Florentine Troops in the Camp of the League of Cognac.

May 1527

The Black Bands: 12 companies (3,337 soldiers in total)

August 1527

The Black Bands:	
Lucantonio Cuppano *	400
Azzo da Correggio	400
Pasquino Còrso	320
Giovanni Turrini	310
Giuliano Strozzi	300
Morgante da Ferrara	300
Cesare Farina	300
Giannetto Albanese	300
Giovanantonio da Castello	250
Amico da Venafro	225
Barbarossa	224
Tommasino Còrso	220
Scipione da Imola	200
Pandolfo Puccini *	300
Giovanni da Colle *	150
Total:	4,229
Others:	
Perugian Infantry (three companies)	1,000
Perugian Light Cavalrymen	150
Mantuan Heavy Cavalrymen	150

* Arrivals since May

late lamented master in the contracting process. In principle, the captains of the Black Bands did not refuse to be given a new commander - the authority of Orazio Baglioni as captain general of the Florentine infantry was never contested. What the 'orphans' of Giovanni refused to accept was a 'manager' other than Giovanni in control of the interests of their group. Though their Florentine employers saw the whole thing in a quite different light, the Bands' refusal of being disbanded was in fact a remarkable display of discipline and cohesion.

Many of the Florentine republican leaders had held important public offices during the times of the first republic, but apparently they had yet to learn the approach needed to handle large bodies of infantry. The Ten were persuaded that the *unione* was only an obstacle that prevented them from taking full control of the Black Bands, not the key to their control. The Ten were indeed astonished by the endurance of the Imperial "exercito del diavolo" [devil's army], wondering what prevented it from simply disbanding as the League's "bestiale exercito" [bestial army] was doing in spite of their best efforts. In fact, an explanation of how this was possible was to be found under their very noses and on their payrolls, but they regarded it as dangerous and unacceptable. The Ten judged the *condotte* that

exceeded five hundred footsoldiers as awkward and potentially dangerous [143] and hence wished to deal with the companies that made up the Black Bands one by one and not as a whole. The Florentine republican leaders preferred to have "una militia obediente et mancho seditiosa che tanta bravura della quale alla fine si fa poco capitale" [an obedient and less seditious unit instead of so much bravura from which we gain little in the end] [144]. They were ready to sacrifice what made the Black Bands an elite unit – their cohesion – in order to get what they wanted. In fact, had it not been for the intervention and the advice of Orazio Baglioni – another mercenary – Florence would have probably lost the Black Bands altogether, by disbandment or mutiny, or by the republican leaders succeeding in their intent, for an ensemble is worth more than just the sum of its parts.

To Lorenzo Martelli, the captains were "huomini indiavolati" [possessed men] who thought only of hoarding money to the detriment of their own men. Initially, the *commissario* judged that the only sure way of breaking their union was to replace at least some of them with commanders loyal to Florence. The *commissario*'s intended victims were Scipione, Morgante, Testino (the lieutenant of Count Azzo, then in Florence), Cesare Farina and Pasquino, who were to be replaced by commanders enlisted by the republic after its restoration: Girolamo de' Ciai (nicknamed Rossino, a Florentine citizen and a former *allievo* of Giovanni de' Medici), Benedetto di Ciriaco dal Borgo, Giovanpaolo da Cortona and Guglielmo Còrso. To pave the way for such a momentous change, and to avoid any potential and dangerous confrontation, the *commissario* planned to buy the neutrality of Tommaso Còrso, Amico da Venafro, Giovanantonio da Castello, Giannetto Albanese, Giovanni Turrini and Lucantonio Cuppano by offering them an upgrading of their *condotte* through an extension *per ad tempo di pace* (a contract granting the *condottiere* a *soldo* from his employer even during peacetime, when he was without a company). On the other hand, Martelli did not expect any trouble to come from Puccini, Barbarossa and Giuliano Strozzi since they were Florentine citizens, and would continue to hold their current positions. In this way, wrote the *commissario*, "noi faremo andare il resto per ordine et non ci comanderanno" [we will run the rest in a ordely way, and they will not command us] [145].

Aware that their masters were plotting something, the Black Bands did not sit back and wait. At the beginning of October, the haughty Ten, who firmly believed "di dovere dare, et non havere ricevere legge da simili gente" [in having to lay down the law to, and not having to receive it from such people], had to find the time and the patience to listen to Giovanantonio da Castello, the spokesman appointed by the captains of the Black Bands. Though appalled by the quality of their interlocutor, the Ten listened to and approved the first of the two *petitioni* of which the captain was bearer, concerning the much-debated topic of the arrears in their wages (on which more will be said in the next Chapter). The content of the second *petitione*, however, was considered so subversive by the Florentine magistrates that Giovanantonio decided not to illustrate it for the time being. In their sec-

[143] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 16 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 42, f. 127r.

[144] The Ten to Raffaele Girolami, Florence, 8 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 42, f. 20v.

[145] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, 240r.

ond *petitione* the captains affirmed "di non voler essere obligati a servire se non tutti insieme" [that they did not want to have to serve if not all together] [146].

The Ten thought that perhaps the captain had eventually decided to withdraw the *petitione* because he was ashamed of the sheer indecency of such a proposal. However, the captains of the Black Bands did not include modesty among their characteristics, and it is very unlikely that Giovanantonio da Castello felt much intimidated by the sight of the Ten frowning at him. Giovanantonio left Florence without presenting the second *petitione* and the Ten did not officially discuss – much less accept – it, but the message had been received. The republic could not afford to lose the Black Bands, which were not only its crack troops, but also a highly visible sign of its will to support the League of Cognac. "A fine non seghua avanti al tempo maggiore seditione" [To avoid greater sedition too soon], the Ten told Martelli to keep secret and postpone his rather radical projects of reform of the Black Bands [147].

However, after Malatesta's return, by mid-October the situation in and around Perugia was stable enough to allow Orazio Baglioni to leave the city, and after a short stay in Florence, to focus his attention on his duties as captain general of the Florentine infantry. Orazio was no less determined to take control of what were supposed to be his troops than were the Ten. His continued presence in the camp and his long talks with Lorenzo Martelli gave a new impulse and a different turn to the projects of reform of the Black Bands, adding the judgement of an experienced infantry commander and military entrepreneur.

The line of action adopted by Orazio was far less direct than that of Florence; to quote the Perugian *condottiere*, the Black Bands were like a foal that needed to be tamed gradually, not all at once, since such an attempt would bring them to reject the bit and the spurs forever [148]. According to Orazio, the first step to be taken to discipline the troops was not simply to remove and replace the most 'seditious' captains, but rather to re-establish the strong central authority that had been lacking since Giovanni's death and the disintegration of his *casa* [149] [household]. This meant, in the first place, the appointment of 'regimental' officers like the *maestro di campo* and the *aguzino*. And it also meant creation of a single *piazza* for all troops in Florentine service: a place where justice was administere and gallows was built [150]. A *maestro di campo* (not to be confused with a *maestre de campo*, the commander of a Spanish *tercio*) was basically a judge who had criminal and civil jurisdiction. In his treatise, Aurelio Cicuta compared the *maestro di campo* as the *podestà* of a city, while the captain general was like its prince [151]. The *maestro di campo* was a soldier (usually a man-at-arms or a light cavalryman) and not a jurist, he determined the encampment's

[146] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 12 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 42, f. 121v.

[147] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 16 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 42, f. 127r.

[148] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 3 January 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 121r.

[149] Even the sergeant-major of the Black Bands had asked to be discharged and replaced; Giovambattista Gotti to the Ten, 7 october 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 40r.

[150] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 20 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 206v.

[151] Cicuta, *Disciplina militare*, cit., p. 406, and also Mora, *Il Soldato*, cit., pp. 50-52; Ferretti, *Della osservanza militare*, cit., pp. 35-40.

structure, divided the various troops quarter by quarter according to their speciality and nationality, and decided on the location of the marketplace. It was the *maestro* who fixed the price of the goods, protected merchants and sutlers from abuses, charging them a fee which was also his main source of income. The *maestro* was also in charge of organising the baggage train during the marches and maintained a large staff, which in the case of the *maestro* of the Florentine forces amounted to twenty-five soldiers. The *aguzino*, on the other hand, was the chief of the military police. With his retinue of twenty soldiers he executed the judgements of the *maestro di campo*, enforced his decrees and restored order when needed. Orazio had, on several occasion, sentenced some soldiers of the Black Bands to be hanged, but this was not among his duties, nor was it good for his honour and *riputatione* [152]. Nominally there was an *aguzino*, but he had no real authority, and the judicial functions were in fact left in the hands of the individual captains.

In practice the office of *maestro di campo* of the Florentine troops had remained vacant for many months, but not simply for financial reasons, as the Ten seemed to think. The real problem had been rather the lack of someone with sufficient authority to ensure that the duties of that office (which required challenging vested interests) could be safely discharged. Only the continued presence of an authoritative captain general could change this state of affairs. At the end of January Florence eventually urged Orazio to appoint a *maestro di campo*, with all the prerogatives due to such an office, since the Perugian *condottiere* could be considered captain general of all the republic's forces in the League's camp (infantry and mounted troops), *de facto* if not *de jure*, while the *commissario* was to appoint the *aguzino* [153]. Orazio's choice was Captain Guglielmo Còrso (currently without company), a man respected both by Italians and by his fellow Corsicans, who had been waiting patiently for an appropriate appointment since Girolami's period in office – receiving ten *scudi* per month as a member of the Florentine commissioners' retinue.

In his bid to take control of the Black Bands, Orazio not only tried to restore the principles of military legality by creating a *piazza* with its respective gallows, but also opened a second 'front' by turning his attention to another fundamental symbol of the soldierly/mercenary world: the *banca* [bench] at which sat the paymasters and muster inspectors, and in front of which the soldiers paraded or queued to receive their salary. What happened at the *banca* every payday, month after month, made it possible to judge the effective control – or lack of it in the case of Florence – of an employer over its troops. Orazio knew that in order to subdue the Black Bands, it was of crucial importance to regain control of the musters and the payment procedures, and to that end in November 1527 he had appointed chancellor the man who was to become his secret weapon in the struggle for control of the Florentine troops.

During the distribution of November's wages in Montefalco, the captains and many of the soldiers of the Black Bands recognised the man who sat at the *banca* next to the Florentine paymaster Giuliano Ciati, no doubt feeling a curious mix of melancholy and concern. *Ser* Bernardino di Ippolito Politi [154], a notary from Arezzo, had been muster inspector of

[152] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 20 January 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 127, f. 96r.

[153] The Ten to Orazio Baglioni, Florence, 24 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 11r.

[154] Ser Bernardino was active as notary from 1518 to 1569. Several registers reporting the *rogiti* [notarial deeds] drawn

Giovanni de' Medici himself. From 1520 to 1532 he worked mainly as chancellor and procurator for the Apostolic Treasury, following his patron Jacopo Salviati, General Treasurer of the Holy See and father-in-law of the late Giovanni de' Medici. In 1527, while Clement VII was held hostage in Castel Sant'Angelo, the situation of the papal bureaucracy was somewhat chaotic, and the supporters of the Medici family – never a much-loved category in the papal administration – found themselves temporarily deprived of backing and protection. For this reason Bernardino was not averse to working for Orazio Baglioni, who apart from his active role in Rome's defence, had always been an enemy of the pope and the Medici family (with the exception of Giovanni).

A consummate muster inspector, Bernardino knew the captains personally, as well as many of the intermediate and lower cadres of the Black Bands. Most of all, he knew all their tricks and weaknesses. Bernardino remembered the "ordine del signor Giovanni" [procedure of *signor* Giovanni], and was not as easily threatened or deceived as his Florentine colleague Giuliano Ciati. Orazio considered the presence of Bernardino as an essential precondition if the Ten wanted him to accept the responsibility of reforming the Black Bands [155].

Since the beginning, Lorenzo Martelli had approved and encouraged the presence of *ser* Bernardino at the *banca* as inspector: the captains of the Bands were afraid of him [156], the notary was being paid by making a small deduction from the soldiers' wages (hence not out of Florence's exhausted finances); and, finally, since he had been "persona del signor Giovanni" [one of *signor* Giovanni's people], no one contested his role - at least not openly. For the Ten, on the other hand, the problem was political rather than financial: Bernardino was a man of the captain general and was yet doing the job of Florentine officers of the *commissario*'s retinue like Giuliano Ciati and Marcello Strozzi.

The *commissario*'s moves caused a wave of confusion and concern among the Ten and also a certain degree of hostility in certain factions of the *Consiglio Grande* in Florence. However, Martelli successfully defended the choice of *ser* Bernardino as muster inspector – in spite of the biased criticism that reached the ears of the Ten from the camp of the League – and defended his own innocence against veiled accusations of misappropriation of public money. Although they trusted Orazio and were pleased by the results of his initiatives, the Ten considered (quite correctly) that these were mostly achieved at the expense of the republic's pre-eminence in the administration of its troops in the Papal States. Martelli's point of view was different. The *commissario* badly needed Orazio's support: both as master of Perugia, during the meetings with the other representatives of the League, and as captain general, when dealing with the troops, because he was living in an environment in which law and *ragione*, by themselves, offered scant support. For many months Florence's paymasters, commissioners and inspectors had been paying the Black Bands and organising regular musters, but even the most 'official' events had proved to be blunt instruments

up by ser Bernardino in the Florentine dominion are kept in the Archivio Notarile Antecosimiano of the Archivio di Stato of Florence, but they do not include the 1520 to 1532 period.

[155] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 18 January 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 77v.

[156] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 5 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 385v.

of control and investigation. "Vostre signorie potrebbono dire 'O che vi fa la rassegna, o tu?'" [Your Lordships could well ask 'And what is the muster inspector – or you – there for?'], but the Black Bands' capability of openly cheating their employers and threatening their representatives was based on force rather than law, and Florence alone could not hope to restore the balance; "ci dicono che e ladri siamo noi et loro i buoni et e belli" [they say that we are the real thieves, while they are absolutely blameless] [157].

Martelli felt that his first responsability was to ascertain the effective composition and fighting capacity of the Florentine troops, and he knew very well that without the help of Orazio the Black Bands would have remained a mystery to him, just as they had to his predecessor. During the distribution of November's and December's wages *ser* Bernardino kept a relatively low profile, but from November onwards Martelli received the first detailed information about the composition and the effective strength of the Bands and the magnitude of Florence's losses due to fraud. With reliable data finally in his hands, the *commissario* was eventually able to report that according to the "vero calculo" [real figures], and excluding Orazio's Perugian infantry, the republic was paying more or less 3,800 men: more specifically 2,150 arquebusiers, 804 footsoldiers of other kinds (i.e. equipped with pikes and other types of mêlée weapons) and 806 *garzoni* [servants]. At the end of his report, a disconsolate Lorenzo Martelli lamented: "hor veghino Vostre Signorie che cosa è questa" [alas, Your Lordships, take a look at this] [158]. In the eyes of Martelli and the Ten there was a catastrophic imbalance between pike and shot, and the *commissario*, as usual, blamed this situation on the greedy captains of the Black Bands who enlisted shooters only, in order to pocket the half *scudo di vantaggio* assigned to the arquebusiers. To remedy this 'appalling' situation, the Ten planned to fix the percentage of pike and shot in the various companies, bringing it to a more orthodox ratio of two thirds pikemen to one third (or at the most forty percent) arquebusiers [159]. The aims of the Florentine republic were essentially defensive, and for this reason the Ten hoped initially to transform the Black Bands from a unit specialized in skirmish and assault tactics into one made up of shock troops capable of holding the field in a pitched battle.

However, Florence's mercenaries and allies had priorities of their own. The high number of arquebusiers on their payrolls was not simply the result of the (outstanding) greed of the captains of the Black Bands, and was far from disastrous if considered from the point of view of a mercenary expeditionary force expected to adjust to a wide variety of tactical circumstances and to act in support of other units of infantry and cavalry, rather than just 'playing solo'. In the end, the Florentine republican leaders had to consider that much of their political weight within the League derived from the fact that Florence had the Black Bands on its payroll. Hence, rather ironically, what made the Bands precious for Lautrec were exactly the characteristics they were trying to suppress. Even before the start of the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples began, it was clear that Lautrec, new captain general of the League (whom the Florentines were fond of invoking), did not simply want more

[157] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 490v.

[158] *Ibid.*, f. 491r.

[159] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 24 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 108r. Only in February did the Ten agree to an increased percentage of arquebusiers.

infantry from Florence. He wanted troops that could offset the shortcomings and boost the fighting potential of those he already had under his command. In other words, Lautrec needed the 'lance' of the dashing Giovanni de' Medici, not the 'shield' of the cautious Florentine republic.

Nevertheless, during his talks with Martelli, Orazio Baglioni also expressed his worries about the excessive proportion of arquebusiers. The Perugian *condottiere* estimated that 1,000-1,200 shooters would have enough firepower to perform all the duties required by their speciality during a siege and in the event of a pitched battle. When the troops were involved in a mêlée, the *giornata* would be decided by the pikemen and the other *armature* [160], that is, by soldiers wearing corselets and equipped with pikes, short polearms (like halberds, partesans, half-pikes) and swords and bucklers. In particular, Baglioni insisted that each captain had to maintain between twenty-five and thirty percent of his footsoldiers *armati* [161] [armoured], and that at least half of the allowance funds (1 extra wage every 10 wages) destined to the Black Bands, the *capisoldi*, were to be destined to the extra pay of these corselets. Together with the presence of *ser* Bernardino's watchful eye during the musters, this measure contributed to make a noticeable reduction, from December to January, in the percentage of arquebusiers (Graph 2) in the Black Bands' ranks, step by step in accordance with Orazio's plans: the bit first, then the spurs. *His* spurs, of course.

At the beginning of January, when Lautrec's intention to move southwards with all the League's forces appeared clear to everybody, the Bands' captains started to negotiate with Florence a large purchase of military equipment: one thousand good pikes, one thousand corselets and six or eight hundred sallets, "ma che fussino bone" [but as long as they are good], and not like the ones usually kept in stock in Florence. The *commissario* warned the Ten that weapons of inferior quality would simply remain unsold [162]. However, there is no evidence that the deal was actually concluded.

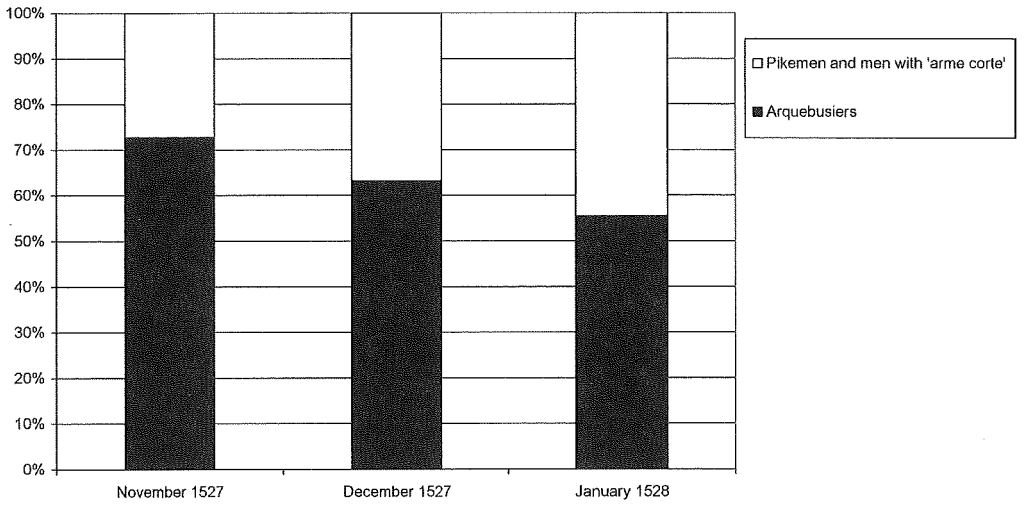
The number of servants was another of the sore points frequently debated between Lorenzo Martelli and the Ten. The servants present at the musters and registered as such constituted a quite significant portion of the Black Bands' effectives. During the marches, the *ragazzi* assigned to the various *capi di squadra* [corporals] and to successful veteran *homini da bene* – here referring to the Italian equivalent of the German *Doppelsöldner* [double pay soldiers] – took care of their masters' possessions, frequently raiding the countryside, while acting as support crew during engagements, carrying and delivering provisions, lead and flasks of powder to the troops on the line and, since most were actually soldiers-in-training, occasionally taking active part in the engagements. When Pierre de Veyre, *sieur* de Migliau and gentleman of the chamber of Charles V, was killed by the arquebusiers of the Black Bands right outside Naples "il ragazo di uno fante da piedi ha hauto la sua bareta, sopra la quale era una medaia et una catena piccola d'oro" [the *ragazo* of a footsoldier took his beret, on which there was a medallion and a small gold chain] [163].

[160] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 491r.

[161] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 3 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 121r.

[162] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 7 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 131v

[163] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 339.



Graph 2. Pike-to-shot Ratio in the Black Bands (November 1527-January 1528).

The servants were both a status symbol and another source of income, since they were assigned personally by the captain of the company, and the pay of a *ragazzo* was in fact a 'dead wage' that was paid into the pockets of his master, in addition to the *caposoldo* and to the *soprasoldo* [extra pay] destined for the *capi di squadra* and for specialists such as 'corselets' and arquebusiers. The Ten recognised the Bands' high percentage of servants as a necessary evil and as another concession they made to their seemingly insatiable mercenary troops. However, as long as they were in fact worth it, the Ten could not object if the precious veteran *homini da bene*, who considered it below their status to serve for only their (increased) wage, brought their servants to the muster to be regularly reviewed and paid. On this topic, Martelli did not completely agree with his superiors. He wanted to reduce the percentage of servants from more than twenty to sixteen percent of the total of the effectives, a measure that would allow Florence to pay for an extra two hundred soldiers.

The *ragazzi* constituted, in theory, the only official remunerated support a unit was supposed to rely on. However, just a step below them came a variegated mass of humanity made up of women of all types (from the professional whores to the legitimate wives of soldiers), boys, assorted small-time traders and craftsmen, sutlers, servants, soldiers without an engagement, pimps, opportunists of all shapes and sizes and so on. All these people attached themselves to the train of wagons that followed any military unit. The cumbersome and famished presence of large numbers of camp followers was a fixed feature of early modern armies and was regularly censured by military treatisers, government officials and, more generally, all those who preached virtue and praised the benefits of abstinence. The massive presence of *putane* [whores], i.e. women in general, was particularly conspicuous and embarrassing. Aurelio Cicuta (who claimed to have served in his youth under the marquis of Pescara) argued in his book on the *Disciplina Militare* that the Italian and Spanish armies of his times were rife with them. Of the French armies he decided to say nothing,

"percioché se si unissero tutte insieme in uniforme le puttane che vi sono, mi potrebbe far una matta paura, se ben fussero a mia difesa et le italiane et le spagnuole, ch'io so che resterebbono vinte dal numero di quelle" [because if all the whores there are were put together in uniform, I would be terrified since all the Italian and Spanish ones coming to my defence would be vanquished by their great number] [164].

Most of the time, however, the camp followers were tolerated because they were far more than a moving brothel, for they performed a variety of essential functions that also included logistic and technical assistance (cooking, washing and nursing) for the soldiers. In practice, the people of the train constituted the only form of private life to which thousands of able-bodied males who lived the nomadic existence of a mercenary soldier for years on end could have more or less regular access. Usually, the older a unit the more complex its retinue, and the Black Bands were *fanteria vecchia*. In an excess of pessimism, Martelli wrote to the Ten that the whole of the Florentine forces in Umbria amounted to the total of five thousand stipulated by the articles of the League of Cognac only if one included in the calculations all the "famigli, ragazi, puttane et altre brigatacce, che ce n'è un mondo" [manservants, footboys, whores and other rabble, of whom there are loads] [165]. Unfortunately, apart from their large numbers, nothing else is known about the irregulars gravitating around the train of the Florentine mercenary troops or about the important role they played in the everyday lives of the soldiers of the Black Bands. Their presence is more easily inferred than proven.

Even though Orazio preferred an indirect approach, he was nevertheless ready to take advantage of any breach in the union of the captains that could lay it open to infiltration by his own people. In cooperation with Florence if possible; but in competition if necessary. At the beginning of November, on the pretext of the excessive, and repeated, delays in the arrival of wages, the Captains Morgante Dentini from Ferrara and Cesare Farina, "parendo loro havere il coltello alla gola" [believing themselves to be in a tight corner], asked to be discharged, and could not even be dissuaded by Orazio [166]. Martelli gave them their due; and although in the end they persuaded Captain Giannetto Albanese to leave the League's camp, he was delighted to see them go without taking with them the large majority of their soldiers. The *commissario* considered Morgante a hothead capable of saving or ruining a situation with equal ease, while Pisani, who had been spying on the captain while he was garrisoned in Narni, considered him "Ferrarese, et pazo, et forse cattivo" [Ferrarese, and rash, and possibly a traitor], since every day he used to leave the town unaccompanied for 4-6 hours [167]. As for Cesare Farina, he had always been so dishonest in his dealings with both his men and Florence that in the end it was not surprising that he left behind him not only his men but even his own staff, from the lieutenant to the secretary. Together, the three disbanded companies amounted to nine hundred men: two hundred and fifty were given to Rossino de' Ciai, "creato del signor Giovanni, nostro fiorentino, et

[164] Cicuta, *Disciplina militare*, cit., p. 401.

[165] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 9 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 80r.

[166] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 12 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 335v.

[167] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Todi, 7 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 393r.

valentissimo giovane" [protégé of *signor* Giovanni, our Florentine and valiant youth] [168] who was backed by the *commissario*, two hundred to Belriguardo da Castiglione, one of Orazio's men, fifty to Scipione da Imola and twenty-five to Amico da Venafro. The rest were to be divided among the remaining companies of the Black Bands.

Needing to act quickly, in order to prevent the desertion or the disbandment of Giannetto's men (who were stationed in Camerino a long way from the main camp), and assuming that there would be no further complications, Martelli decided to give that company to Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto, another member of Orazio's entourage. The Perugian *condottiere*, however, was not pleased by this, since he wanted the company to be given instead to his relative and protégé Bino Signorelli, a former *allievo* of Giovanni de' Medici [169]. Rebuked by the Ten [170] for being excessively accommodating to Orazio's previous requests, the *commissario* had to withdraw even the captaincy offered to Giacomo Filippo [171]. Complaining bitterly about the Ten's unjustified lack of trust, Orazio threatened to go to Florence to discuss the matter directly with his masters.

One of the first to consider the intense activity and growing influence of Orazio Baglioni with suspicion was Carlo Nuvoloni, the commander of the company of Mantuan heavy cavalry that would remain in Florentine service until December 1527. The *condotta* stipulated between Federico II Gonzaga and the Medicean regime had not yet expired, and the marquis of Mantua was still technically speaking the captain general of all Florentine and papal forces. From the beginning, however, the appointment of the marquis had had a political rather than military significance. Federico's general-captaincy officialized Mantua's involvement in the League of Cognac, and at the same time gratified the touchy marquis's honour, compensating him for the risks he was taking by joining the anti-Imperialist coalition. Even though, after the overthrow of the Medici regime the Florentine republic and Federico Gonzaga both looked forward to the expiry date of a *condotta* that both sides considered now ineffective and compromising, in his master's absence Carlo Nuvoloni was looking after both his men-at-arms and his *riputatione*, and he clearly perceived Baglioni's growing influence as a threat.

The meticulous Mantuan commander refused to consider as a simple oversight Orazio's signature as "capitano generale dello exercito fiorentino" [captain general of the Florentine army] on a herald's safe-conduct that he chanced to examine [172], and he detected his influence behind the decision of the Ten to enlist only light horsemen for the future. Nuvoloni was actually wrong in believing that the Perugian *condottiere* had been also appointed cap-

[168] The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, Florence, 10 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 43, f. 3v.

[169] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, Montefalco, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 409r; Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, cit., p. 98.

[170] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence 27 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 42, ff. 199r-200r.

[171] Eventually, to appease Orazio Baglioni and not to completely ruin the captain, who had already incurred considerable expense, Giacomo Filippo was given a *provvisione* while he was without a company; ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, f. 13v.

[172] Carlo Nuvoloni to the marquis of Mantua, 12 October 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, f. 361r.

tain general of the Florentine light cavalry. However, as captain general of the infantry, Orazio was also the holder of the largest *condotta* of light cavalry of the Florentine army, and the two commands were tactically very much interdependent. So once the Mantuan men-at-arms had been replaced by light horsemen, all the Florentine forces would have been *de facto* under Orazio direct command [173]. Whether or not Orazio had a hidden purpose when he asserted that the light cavalrymen were better at supporting the tactical role of his troops than *homini d'arme*, tactically speaking it was very sensible advice, and Martelli could only agree, "perché in vero questa militia lo ricercherebbe, et che e' vagliono hoggi più 100 cavalli leggieri che 100 huomini d'armi et meno spesa" [because indeed these troops would require it, and nowadays a hundred light horsemen are worth more than a hundred men-at-arms, and cost less] [174]. During the following year, as the siege of Naples progressed and the footsoldiers of the Black Bands suffered heavy losses owing to lack of adequate coverage and support from cavalry, the Ten had plenty of occasions to regret not having followed Orazio's recommendation to recruit 250-300 light horsemen *alla borgognona* to replace Nuvoloni's men-at-arms who had returned to Mantua after the failure of the League's attack against the Imperial light cavalry at Monterotondo (see Appendix 3).

Nuvoloni was at least partially right. The support Orazio offered to the *commissario*, together with his precious insights into the structure of the Black Bands and their effectives, did not come without a price. Granted that Orazio Baglioni was remarkably loyal (if not always honest) in his dealings with Florence, the only way he knew to accomplish his task as captain general of the republic's infantry and gain control of the Black Bands, while at the same time preserving his own interests and *riputatione*, was to take effective possession of them, even if this meant competing with his Florentine masters. To make the famous Black Bands work properly and to control them, one had first to understand and control the network of interests that linked the captains together and, by a combination of threats and compromises, become its guarantor – at least for the time being. However, this could be accomplished only by the authoritative presence of a great military entrepreneur – a man whose word and whose financial resources could be relied on, as Giovanni had been – and not by an impersonal, distant institution like the Florentine republic.

The *unione* of the captains had never been an agreement between equals. A captain's reputation and income were proportionate to the number of footsoldiers under his command (Table 1), and although the 'base' – so to speak – of the captains of the Black Bands seems to have prevailed initially, among them were at least three *primi inter pares* – Lucantonio Cuppano, Pasquino Còrso (?-ca. 1535) and Azzo da Correggio (?-1528) whose interests and ambitions clearly exceeded those of their colleagues.

Lucantonio Cuppano had been a member of Giovanni's personal retinue since the time the future Great Devil had decided to take up the profession of arms. He eventually became Giovanni's most trusted captain: his "occhio dritto" [right eye], if we are to believe Pietro

[173] Carlo Nuvoloni to the marquis of Mantua, 4 October 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, f. 353v.

[174] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 350r.

Aretino, who also claimed that he himself had been his left eye [175]. Though he may have begun his career as a page of Giovanni himself, he was not low-born. He was from a well-connected family with military traditions from Montefalco, in Umbria, and like many other *giovanetti* of the same background he had been sent to join the Medici household to receive an 'education' appropriate to his condition and to find his way in the world (his brothers instead were sent to the Gonzaga court of Mantua). His father had served under the famous *condottiere* Bartolomeo d'Alviano, and Lucantonio was on friendly terms with the latter's widow Pentesilea (sister of Giampaolo Baglioni), who lived in Pitigliano and from whom he received letters and useful information during the 1528 campaign [176]. Lucantonio's prestige among the captains of the Black Bands was very high, and he did not allow the Ten to forget the fact that he had been in command of a *colonnello* (Appendix 1).

Pasquino was the commander of the largest of the two Corsican companies of the Black Bands (his own and Tommasino's), and was probably also an informal leader of the other members of this *natione*, which in every moment of crisis of the Bands had always remained united among themselves. Since the beginning of his career, these proud and touchy islanders had always been a component of the troops commanded by Giovanni de' Medici. They had evolved from the group of Corsican bodyguards that had surrounded the proud, hot-tempered nephew of Pope Leo X since the days of his youth in Rome and had fought at his side during the frequent violent quarrels with the scions of a bellicose Roman aristocracy often hostile to the Medici. The 'ethnic' character and good reputation of the Corsican companies remained a factor to be held in due consideration when Martelli and the Ten planned their reform of the Black Bands.

Finally, very little is known about Azzo di Gaspare da Correggio [177] count of Casalpò (between Reggio Emilia and Parma), nicknamed *Contazzo*, even though he appears among Aretino's fondest memories of the dissolute times with Giovanni and his associates in Reggio Emilia. On more than one occasion Giovanni used Reggio Emilia as a base for operations and recruiting. He had many contacts and relations in the area since he acted as protector of the lands and interests of his half-sister Bianca Riario, widow of Count Troilo de' Rossi and mother of Pier Maria and Giovangirolamo. However, we know more about Azzo's expectations and manoeuvres than about those of his two associates/rivals Lucantonio and Pasquino, because in order to further and strengthen his position in the struggle for the control of the Black Bands he chose to approach the Florentine republic and its representatives directly.

In July 1527 Raffaelle Girolami, first *commissario* of the Florentine republic in the League's camp, had granted Azzo the rank of colonel – probably as a compensation for his support. In order not to upset the unstable internal balance of power within the Black Bands, Girolami and Azzo had agreed to keep the promotion secret for the time being, but from September to October Azzo was in Florence, discussing the details of his promotion secretly with the Ten

[175] Aretino, *Lettere*, cit., vol. I, p. 468.

[176] Pentesilea d'Alviano to Lucantonio Cuppano, Pitigliano, 5 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 215r.

[177] On two licentious episodes that involved the "buon Contazzo da Casalpò" [good old Contazzo from Casalpò], his wife and Pietro Aretino, see Aretino, *Lettere*, cit., vol. II, p. 241.

and the *Gonfaloniere* himself and asking to include some captains (unfortunately we do not know which) in his *colonnello*. In the end (and unlike Giovanantonio da Castello) he made a good impression on the Ten, and on the *Gonfaloniere* Niccolò Capponi, and he agreed to postpone further the publication of his *patente di colonnello*, until the December payday, so as to give Martelli time to prepare the ground. In exchange for his patience and discretion, the Ten added a secret clause [178] to Azzo's *condotta* which transformed his company of 400 footsoldiers into two smaller companies of 200 men each. Azzo's lieutenant Testino became *de facto* a captain with his own staff and *provvisione*, while at the same time Azzo's salary remained unchanged [179]. Martelli disapproved of the decision of his superiors, for during Azzo's stay in Florence Testino had been a constant source of embarrassment and trouble for him. Besides being "un poco scandaloso" [somewhat scandalous] [180], in a short time Testino had proved himself to be troublesome, avaricious and arrogant. On one occasion, wrote Martelli, Testino "venne in camera mia dove non era se non un mio servitore, et dissemi parole di natura che io dubitai forte non mi manomettessi" [came into my room, where I was alone with my servant, and spoke to me in such a way that I strongly believed that he might even assault me] [181].

As it turned out, however, after his return to the camp of the League, Azzo became in fact Martelli's second military point of reference after Orazio Baglioni, with whom, at this stage, the colonel *in pectore* co-operated actively and loyally. At the end of January Orazio, unwilling to leave the camp of the League at that particular moment, even sent Azzo to Recanati to honour Lautrec on his behalf [182]. The captain general of the Florentine infantry described the Emilian *condottiere* as "homo da bene che merita" [a valiant and deserving man], supported his claim to colonelship, and backed the count's proposal to appoint not just one, but two, or even three colonels, needed to co-ordinate the groups of three to four companies (that is, 1,000-1,500 men) so frequently formed during the marches, or for some specific tactical purpose: "che spesse volte accade mandare in mille o millecinquecento fanti et essendoci tre o quattro capitani sonno de' tanti cervelli, el che essendo poi un colonnello quale a tucti comanda le cose sortiscano un bon effecto" [as often happens one thousand or one thousand five hundred footsoldiers are sent and if there are three or four captains, there are as many opinions, but if there is one colonel commanding all of them, things turn out for the best] [183]. Just as he had promoted the re-formation of 'regimental' offices such as the *maestro di campo* and the *aguzino*, Orazio approved of the appointment of several colonels because these would allow him to control the Black Bands more effectively, especially in view of their imminent participation in the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples, a fact that the Perugian *condottiere* was already taking for granted.

[178] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, ff. 333v-334r.

[179], f. 206v.

[180] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 4 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 220v. The exact nature of Testino's allegedly 'scandalous' behaviour is never fully explained by Martelli, and may have been his sexual habits.

[181] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, date unknown, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 243r.

[182] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Recanati, 31 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 167v.

[183] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, S. Renzano, 5 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 127, f. 140v.

The December pay day came and went, and the officialization of Azzo's promotion was once again postponed. The Florentine republic trusted the count of Casalpò (who, nevertheless, asked for explanations and sent his lieutenant to Florence to discuss the matter with the Ten [184]), but hesitated to follow the line of action suggested by Orazio. The fact was that the appointment of one or more colonels would have implied the survival of the Black Bands as an independent force and the substantial failure of the efforts of the Florentine republic to control them. Instead, Florence's intention was to confer on Azzo, Lucantonio and Pasquino a higher rank over their colleagues by conceding them – as proof of the city's strength and confidence and as sign that the republic recognised its faithful servants and, in time, would remember the names of other meritorious soldiers – a privilege that came directly from Florence: a *provvisione a tempo di pace* [185]. In the past, at least, the status of stipendiary *per ad tempo di pace* [in peacetime] had been a coveted privilege, but the Ten soon found out that while Giovanni's 'orphans' did not refuse such a remunerative bonus, they saw a far greater appeal in the opportunities offered by war itself and by their *unione*. Even the negotiations for the *provvisioni* had been long and difficult. Aware of their reputation and of Florence's state of need, all the captains of the Black Bands were making demands. Cuppano, in particular, initially asked for a *provvisione* of 400 *ducati* per year, justifying his request by pointing out that he had been in charge of fifteen hundred men at the defence of Frosinone, and that the marquis of Saluzzo had already offered him the captaincy of Genoa's French garrison *ad tempo di pace* as well [186]. But more than the *provvisione*, what Giovanni's former 'right eye' really desired was the long-promised increase in the number of footsoldiers under his command. The exact number did not matter: even two men, said Lucantonio, would suffice [187].

The Ten were disconcerted by the poor results of their initiative and asked Martelli polemically why he had not explained adequately to the three captains the real meaning of their *provvisioni* [188]. The disconsolate answer of the weary *commissario* – an embarrassing reply that initially he wanted to give to the Ten personally, given that he was imminently returning to Florence – was that in fact he had complied with their orders, but the Bands' captains seemed to be well informed about the Ten's 'confidential' resolutions and were not particularly enticed by them. "Io lo sapevo pezo fa" [I've known about this for a long time], said Azzo, adding maliciously: "Vedete che ancora io ho degli amici" [As you can see, I too have some friends], while Pasquino simply answered: "Io sono advisato di tutto" [I have been told about everything] [189]. However, it was Lucantonio who eventually gave the most direct and explicative reply: in his view, an addition of twenty five soldiers (a *squadra* [squad]) to one's command in wartime was more desirable than one thousand ducats in

[184] Azzo da Correggio to the Ten, Ripaiolo, 10 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 120, f. 80r.

[185] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 30 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 114v. On 18 January Lucantonio and Azzo were granted a *provvisione* of 300 scudi per year, Pasquino one of 250 scudi: ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, f. 10r/v.

[186] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 20 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 89v.

[187] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 19 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 84r.

[188] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 5 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 129r.

[189] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 8 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 217v.

peacetime [190]. Martelli admitted his defeat; maybe his successor would succeed in reforming the Black Bands in the way the Ten desired. A few days later the Ten allowed the witty *commissario* to return to Florence in time to enjoy carnival with his family.

Florence wanted to keep at least the Black Bands near Perugia for its own defence, but since Azzo's return from his meeting with Lautrec in January it appeared clear to everybody, from the rank and file up to the captain general of the Florentine infantry, what the plans of the new French captain general of the League were; and, above all, what it was in their interest to do. Joined together, the two armies of the League – the one in Umbria whose forces were flagging and the already massive host that was descending from northern Italy – would soon form the biggest army seen in Italy for a long time. Once the dangerous (but badly weakened) Imperial army had been defeated, nothing would stand between the French and their partisans and the spoils of the whole Kingdom of Naples. Dozens and dozens of baronies that would soon be vacant. The general impression was that the day of reckoning in southern Italy between the Aragonese and the Angevin parties was near. For a soldier, whatever his rank, it was the occasion of a lifetime. Lautrec specifically and repeatedly asked for the famous Black Bands to be at his side, and Orazio Baglioni wanted to be present at the "spoglie del Regno" [division of the spoils of the *Regno*] [191]. The Ten were worried by the Perugian *condottiere*'s "fantasia" [dream] and asked Martelli to remind him that, given the danger the pope represented for Florence and for the seigniory of his family in Perugia, it was time to protect their respective *stati* and not to conquer new ones [192]. However, like the second-born of any illustrious family, after loyally doing more than his share to reassert the supremacy of his line, Orazio was thinking about his future and probably considered that he could well use a rich *stato* and a prestigious title of his own in the Kingdom of Naples. The Ten were also afraid of the negative reactions of the captains of the Black Bands, who were equally eager to join *monsieur* Lautrec in his campaign of conquest, so Lorenzo Martelli had to keep strictly secret his superiors' intention to use them instead as a defence force [193].

Eventually the pressure of both its allies and its mercenaries proved to be too great for Florence, and the Ten was forced to reach a compromise. Orazio Baglioni, his light cavalrymen and four thousand footsoldiers would march southwards, while all the remaining forces, that is two companies of the Black Bands stationed in Montepulciano (those of Giovanantonio da Castello and Barbarossa) and the company of Pasquino Còrso, would remain between Perugia and Montepulciano [194]. However, this decision caused a semi-mutiny among the ranks of Pasquino's band. Determined to go "in sulla guerra" [where there was war], the soldiers prepared to desert their commander en masse. Though ready to comply with the Ten's orders, the Corsican captain confessed to sharing his men's desire and - since there was nothing he could really do to prevent the disbanding of his company

[190] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 9 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 220v.

[191] The Ten to Marco del Nero, Florence, 5 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 133v.

[192] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 8 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 144v.

[193] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 8 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 143v.

[194] The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini Florence, 15 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarìe, 43, f. 165v.

- reminded them that he alone, deprived of the soldiers that had served under his command for long years and whom he knew personally, would be a rather inadequate tool [195]. Following the advice of their new *commissario* Giovambattista Soderini, the Ten authorised Pasquino to join his fellow captains.

In November 1527 the companies of Giovanantonio da Castello and Barbarossa (whose name was probably Barbarossa de' Bartoli) had been sent to Montepulciano to deter pro-Imperial Siena from continuing its incursions into Florentine territory. Their arrival provoked the usual chorus of protests among Montepulciano's citizens. The Black Bands, described as "gente insatiabile et male avvezzi" [insatiable and spoiled people] by the city's *commissario* Pietro da Verrazzano, were not garrison material and they had treated the *ville* of the Florentine *contado* as if they had been marching through enemy countryside. Moreover, the two companies had 90 mounts to be fed, most of which were nags [196], a number that was considered excessive for two infantry units [197].

By February 1528 the call of war was strong in the League's camp, and it was even stronger in Montepulciano, where the soldiers, impoverished by three months of garrison duty, were afraid of being left behind by the rest of the army (as indeed Florence intended). While Giovannantonio da Castello's company had to be disbanded altogether, Barbarossa's succeeded in maintaining its numbers and made good its losses with da Castello's pikemen, though the number of arquebusiers dropped dramatically from 134 to 70 between January to February [198]. Pursued by the Ten's indignant edicts, the specialist arquebusiers fled Montepulciano to join again the League's camp, rightly confident that somebody would soon give them money and the chance to plunder.

[195] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Foligno, 25 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 241r.

[196] The *Priori* of Montepulciano to the Ten, Montepulciano, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 407r.

[197] Pietro da Verrazzano to the Ten, Montepulciano, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 405v. Barbarossa' s company had arrived first with 35 horses and nags, followed by da Castello's with 55.

[198] ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, f. 94r/v.

III. On to Naples

1. The Price of Bread and Bravery

"ἐν δορὶ μέν μοι μᾶζα μεμαγμένη, ἐν δορὶ δ'οἶνος
Ισμαρικός, πίνω δ'ἐν δορὶ κεκλιμένος" [199].

Archilochus, Greek mercenary and poet,
seventh century B.C.

Immediately after the restoration of the republic in June 1527, the Ten took great care to inform all their allies of the need to reassess the level of Florence's financial contribution to the anti-Imperialist alliance. Since the beginning of the war waged by the League of Cognac against the Empire in 1526 – a war in which Florence had been involved by the Medici and their partisans – the city had spent more than eight hundred thousand *ducati*, "et siamo consumati" [and we are exhausted] [200]. "El tempo tyrannico" [The tyrannical time], as the republican leaders often called the Medicean regime, had been a long period of financial and political "esterminio" [annihilation] for its opponents, but not only for them. In fact, the growing general hostility of the Florentine moneyed class towards the ever-rising costs of Clement VII's Roman policy contributed greatly to the isolation of the Medici party in Florence and to its downfall in the days following the sack of the Holy City. The Florentine republic signed the articles of the League of Cognac, as the previous Medici government had done, but from that moment on it agreed to pay only a fifth of its total expenses and stuck strictly to that rule.

On his return to Venice in 1528, Marco Foscari, the usually well-informed former ambassador of the *Serenissima* in Florence, estimated that the city's gross revenue amounted to 340,000 Venetian ducats, of which 240,000 were "di spexa" [already spent], leaving the republic with a margin of 100,000 ducats [201]. However, we must consider that these estimates referred to the ordinary peacetime income from the indirect taxes that sustained the ordinary expenses of government and did not cover the direct taxes and the cost of defence and war. More than thirty years after the descent of Charles VIII, the wartime financial policies of the Renaissance states had not lost their character of extraordinary expense. To finance its wars Florence, like other Italian powers, resorted to *ad hoc* expedients such as

[199] "To the spear I owe the barley bread, to the spear the wine of Ismaros, and leaning on the spear I drink"

[200] The Ten to Roberto Acciaioli, Florence, 9 June 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 2r.

[201] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 64

accatti [loans] and provisional taxes imposed on its citizens. In the absence of a specific war budget it is therefore rather difficult to assess both the effective availability of capital in the republic and the extent to which the war of the League of Cognac weighed upon the Florentine state and its citizens.

In November 1527 the Ten complained that they were spending 25,000 *scudi* per month to sustain the war effort – "spesa... la quale è a noi intollerabile" [an expense... which is intolerable for us] [202] – and in January 1528 the republican leaders claimed that their monthly expenditure amounted to 30,000 *ducati*. By that stage three years of Florentine revenue had been pawned, its churches stripped of their silver and the purses of its citizens emptied "con tanti accatti et balzelli che si sono posti loro" [with so many loans and taxes imposed on them]. Moreover, the republic was about to impose a further *accatto* of 100,000 *ducati* on the Florentine clergy without asking the pope's permission [203].

From June 1527 to August 1528, to pay the Black Bands the Florentine *commissarii* in the the League's camp received a total of 188,178 ducats [204]. To this already considerable sum we should add the payments destined for Orazio Baglioni and his troops in the camp. From June 1527 until his death on 22 May 1528, Florence gave Orazio 3,274 *ducati* a month to pay his 1,000 Perugian footsoldiers and four *quartieri* [quarters] of 1,875 *ducati* each (the salaries of the cavalry forces were always paid quarterly), which included the wages of the 150 light horsemen (40 *ducati* a year each) and the four instalments of his own *piatto* – which amounted to 1,500 *ducati d'oro* a year [205]. Moreover, until the expiry of the marquis of Mantua's *condotta* in December 1527, 150 out of the 315 lances of heavy cavalry (100 *ducati* a year each) were to be paid by Florence together with the 5,000 *ducati* (out of a total of 13,000) of his annual *piatto* [206]. Between these and other extraordinary expenses it is likely that the republic spent approximately a quarter of a million ducats to pay and keep its expeditionary forces operational in the League's camp – without considering, therefore, the additional costs of defending Florence's territories. For the protection of its domain, by August 1527 the republic employed about 4,400 Italian infantrymen and 165 light horsemen [207].

During the period of the last republic, the *fiorino* was still the gold coin of Florence (see Table 2). Yet, although the *fiorino* retained its traditional weight and composition, by this time even in the official documents it was frequently called the *ducato*, like the coin of Venetian origin (and of a slightly inferior alloy) that had replaced the Florentine currency as the gold standard throughout Europe during the fifteenth century. However, as the Italian Wars progressed and as, at least initially, the French cause progressed, in Italy the

[202] The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, Florence, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 167r.

[203] The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, Florence, 19 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 43, f. 92v.

[204] ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Debitori e creditori, 66, ff. 6v-7r. ; Debitori e creditori, 67, ff. 98v- 99r. These data are confirmed in the Ten's main *filza* of *condotte* and allocations: ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64.

[205] On the *condotta* of Orazio Baglioni: ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, ff. 3r-4r.

[206] On the *condotta* of Federico Gonzaga, see ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, f. 60r/v.

[207] ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, ff. 66r-67v.

Table 2. The Florentine Coins.

Money of Account
1 *lira* = 20 *soldi*
1 *soldo* = 12 *denari*

Gold Coins
Florentine *fiorino/ducato* = 7 *lire* = 140 *soldi* = 1680 *denari* = 10 1/2 *giulii*
Scudo (in Florence) = 6 *lire*, 4 *soldi* = 124 *soldi* = 1488 *denari* = 9 1/3 *giulii*
Venetian *ducato* = 6 *lire*, 4 *soldi* = 124 *soldi*
Scudo (in Venice) = 6 *lire*, 14 *soldi* = 134 *soldi*

Silver Coins
Florentine *grosso* = 7 *soldi* = 84 *denari*
Florentine *barile* = 12 *soldi* and 6 *denari* = 150 *denari*
Papal *giulio* = 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari* = 160 *denari*

Billon Coins
Florentine *cratia*, or *quattrino grosso* = 4 *quattrini bianchi* = 5 *quattrini neri*
Florentine *quattrino nero* = 4 *denari*

ducat was in its turn replaced by the lighter (in terms of both weight and alloy) French *écu au soleil*. First Genoa (1508), then Milan (1520) and eventually Venice (1528) started to mint their own versions of the *scudo*, while the Florentine republic coined small amounts of *scudi* only during the siege of 1529-30 that was to end its existence once and for all. Florence adopted the *scudo* as a gold coin only after the restoration of the Medici regime. Until then, the *ducato/fiorino* exchange rate remained stable at 7 *lire*, and that of the *scudo* at 6 *lire* and 4 *soldi* [208].

The flow of money from Florence to the League's camp took the shape of tens of thousands of golden ducats, but also *scudi* and silver and billon (copper-silver alloy) coins. Finding cash of any kind quickly became one of the Ten's main concerns. Month after month, they fought against the clock to send their *commissarii* the money needed to pay the Florentine forces, but what they were able to scrape together generally arrived with considerable delay, moreover in quantities and formats that seldom satisfied the troops. The Ten 's inability to provide their representatives in the camp of the League with large amounts of cash in advance also undermined their authority and systematically crippled all projects for reforming the Black Bands. As Lorenzo Martelli put it with his usual wit, "la tardezza de' danari mi ha tagliato un gran pezo di lingua, et finché con epsi non me la ricuciono Vostre Signorie, non ho ardire di intraprendere cosa che necessaria sia" [the delay in the money has cut off a large piece of my tongue, and until Your Lordships sew it back on by producing it, I have not the courage to undertake anything, no matter how necessary] [209].

[208] On the transformations of the Florentine monetary system in the sixteenth century, see C.M. Cipolla, *La moneta a Firenze nel Cinquecento*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1987; R.A. Goldthwaite, *Studi sulla moneta fiorentina - secoli XIII-XVI*, Florence, Olschki, 1994; M. Bernocchi, *Le monete della Repubblica fiorentina*, Florence, Olschki, 1974-1985, vol. III.

[209] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 125, f. 122r.

The different types of currencies also generated different problems. Even the poor quality and shape of the golden ducats and *scudi* sent to the camp sometimes caused complaints. Yet, the only time they were openly contested by the troops was when Florence, in desperation (and out of cash), decided to pay its troops camped out in the Papal States with the only coins the Ten were able to lay hands on: that is, with thousands of Turkish ducats. Martelli wrote that "è una festa vedere come li squadrono questi fantaccini" [it's hilarious to see how these soldiers look over the coins], but had to admit that persuading the soldiers to accept those strange-looking coins was a real struggle [210]. Considering that a Turkish ducat was valued at a half *giulio* less than a Florentine ducat, it is unlikely that the poor *fantaccini* [infantrymen] of the Black Bands came to share their *commissario*'s amusement, even after they had overcome their initial diffidence [211].

The silver and billon coins were a different matter. Although the soldiers of the Black Bands were generally paid with a combination of gold, silver and billon coins, it was the small denominations that were more frequently used, and their quality and value was of critical importance in the everyday life of the rank-and-file, who relied entirely on their wages to pay for everything they needed – including food and equipment. On several occasions Martelli asked the Ten not to send the traditional, by then outdated, silver coins of Florence, the *grossi*, because it was almost impossible to persuade the soldiers to accept them [212]. Soldiers and sutlers rejected the *grossi* unless these were valued at 20 *quattrini* (i.e. 80 *denari*) rather than 7 *soldi* (84 *denari*), their theoretical value, not to mention the fact that many coins were in such bad shape that they were worth even less [213]. So every time *grossi* were used, it entailed a loss for the city. The *barile* [214], the new Florentine silver coin minted since 1504, was much easier to distribute because it had originated as the Florentine equivalent of the papal *giulio* [215], and the basic wages of the soldiers of the Bands, who had started the League 's war in papal service, were still calculated in *giulii*. Even though there was no parity between the two coins, the Ten kept the nominal value of the *barile* in the League's camp the same as that of the *giulio* at least until January 1528 when, troubled by the soldiers" complaints and their possible future reactions, they decided that this was an unfair way of saving money, being mostly at the expense of the already harassed rank-and-file [216]. Even in the case of the billon coins there were adjustments to be made: at the end of January 1528 a *cratia* was effectively worth, at best, 4 *quattrini*, not 5, and the sutlers who brought their goods to the camp considered 8 1/2 *cratie* as equivalent to a *barile* [217].

[210] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 2 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 346r.

[211] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 29 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 231r.

[212] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 240r.

[213] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 9 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 499r.

[214] The new coin, initially called *carlino*, like the silver coin of the Kingdom of Naples, was eventually dubbed *barile* because one was needed to pay the *gabella* of a *barile* [barrel] of wine.

[215] The papal *carlino* was commonly called the *giulio* after the pontificate of Julius II.

[216] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 16 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 43, f. 81r.

[217] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 90v.

Given the frequency with which wages were in arrears, and given the intrinsic limitations of early modern public finances, a military entrepreneur could be required to advance the money and pay his soldiers out of his own resources in order to prevent them from mutinying and disbanding and causing him to lose all his investments. Being a creditor to his own employer was not without its dangers, but it also presented many advantages, such as the interest rates and an increased bargaining power vis-a-vis the employer; it could also be a good investment, especially in the case of Florence which still had quite a good reputation for solvency. Captain generals, colonels, captains, and even sergeant-majors could become active participants in a credit system that was frequently tapped by their employers in situations of need.

In the case of the Florentine republic, the most conspicuous example was of course that of Orazio Baglioni, on whose lands the League's army was camped for most of 1527. The Perugian *condottiere*, who had his own merchant-bankers willing to finance him, advanced thousands of *ducati* to *commissario* Lorenzo Martelli when the Black Bands' pay was badly in arrears [218], and he did the same when Giovambattista Soderini held the same office. Orazio also loaned large sums of money to the Venetian *provveditore* Alvise Pisani, to prevent the Swiss troops of the *Serenissima* from disbanding. Orazio, however, was not Florence's only option. As he sat with empty pockets at the *consulta*'s table in Todi, Lorenzo Martelli was put under pressure by the French and Venetians representatives to ask the captains of the Black Bands for money; he decided not to follow this advice only for reasons of political expediency [219].

These, and other, reservations were cast aside by the Florentine republican leaders and their representatives on the field when the Black Bands joined the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples and the dispatch of large sums of money became increasingly difficult and dangerous. As we shall see, during the siege of Naples, Marco del Nero, Florence's ambassador in the League's camp and a member of the city's moneyed elite, tapped all the available sources of cash, and many of his clients were military enterprisers of various nationalities. Del Nero's intense activity as a financial broker is an excellent example of Renaissance makeshift warfare finance, a subject that, by its very nature, is extremely difficult to analyse. The ambassador used his personal wealth – as well as his wide network of friendships and connections – to search for the cash Florence needed so desperately. The loans he negotiated, often amounting to thousands of *scudi*, were made to him personally and not to the republic. He would prepare bills of exchange that were payable, for instance, on the markets of Lyon or Venice (or even directly in Florence), as required by the lenders; then he would ask the Ten to transfer the same amount to his agents in Florence. A French infantry captain, for instance, gave the Florentine ambassador 497 *scudi* and in return received a bill of exchange that was valid at Lyon's Easter fair [220]. Count Wolf, an *Oberst* [colonel] of the Landsknechts of the German Black Bands loaned him 100 *scudi*, to be paid back to his wife in Florence [221]. After del Nero fell ill, the sergeant-major of the Italian

[218] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 225r.

[219] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 347r/v.

[220] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 256v.

[221] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 20 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 233r.

Black Bands, Giovambattista Gotti, advanced over 400 gold *scudi* to *commissario* Soderini [222].

Although credit extension could be useful and profitable, a military entrepreneur's main source of income remained his contract. Moreover, the contract inherited by the Black Bands was a particularly good one, for to begin with it was divided into monthly instalments that corresponded to those of the calendar, and not to 36 or even 40 days, as was the case in most infantry *condotte*. The captain's salary was calculated in *scudi*, in proportion (10%) to the number of men nominally enrolled in his company. Hence, for example, Pandolfo Puccini, who had a company of 300 soldiers, received for his *persona* a *provisione* of 30 *scudi* each month. Yet, this was just a part of the money a captain administered, out of which he could make a good profit, often to the detriment of both his men and his employer. For example, he was entirely responsible for the management and assignment of both the half-*scudo* wage-bonus assigned to each arquebusier and the *capisoldi*, that is the allowance funds (1 extra wage per 10 wages) customarily distributed among the company's officers (lieutenant, sergeant, drummer, corporals) and specialists such as the *corsaletti*. To this, we should also add the wages of the servants assigned personally by the captain to non-commissioned officers and other *homini da bene*; again, their pay was a potential source of further gain for their masters. Although Florence tried, without success, to find a way of bypassing the captains and distributing those bonuses directly, captains guarded their privileges, as well as their account books, jealously.

What the footsoldiers of the Black Bands received directly *alla banca* (i.e. one by one, under the Florentine paymasters' eyes) were the 28 *giulii* of their basic monthly pay, which were equal in value to 18 *lire*, 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari*. However, after the deductions made by the captains – with various excuses and petty expenses that Martelli considered as no more than brazen fiddling – the final amount left in the hands of the "povero fante" [poor rank-and-file] was reduced to less than 18 *lire*, even though (again according to Martelli) it was impossible to survive in the League's camp even on 24 *lire* [223]. The conditions of payment of Orazio's infantry troops were different. In theory, they received 20 *lire* and 4 *soldi* each, with a ten percent of *capisoldi*, but the Perugian troops were never properly mustered and inspected by Florentine functionaries and the actual method of payment used by Baglioni's paymasters is, unfortunately, unknown.

The Florentines boasted that they held "meritamente el titulo delli migliori pagatori di soldati di tutta Italia" [deservedly the title of being those who paid the soldiers the most anywhere in Italy] [224], and their claim was true – up to a point. Even when Venice decided in April 1528 to raise the wartime salary of its footsoldiers to three Venetian *scudi* every 36 days – which meant ten pay packets per year – with a *capisoldo* of 15% to be divided among arquebusiers, *soldati segnalati* and *lance spezzate* [225], the monthly wage of the base soldiers of

[222] ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 46, f. 153r.

[223] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 224v.

[224] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 2 November 1527. ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 152r.

[225] The Senate to Alvise Pisani and Piero Pesaro, Venice, 23 April 1528, ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni secreta, 53, f. 13r. For a brief history of the wages of the Venetian infantry, see Hale, *The Military Organization*, cit., pp. 494-501.

the Black Bands was still higher than that of their Venetian counterparts. Moreover, the real problem was not the size of the wages, but the fact that they arrived with considerable delay – up to 50 days in the case of the Venetian troops (when they arrived at all), 15-20 days in the case of the Florentine troops.

On payday, all the tricks of the military trade were employed to cheat the paymaster, and some of Giovanni's "orphans" – "che forse credo tutti" [I believe maybe all of them], wrote Martelli – resorted regularly to the old, but always effective, stratagem of "padding the payroll' by exaggerating the effective number of soldiers in their companies and pocketing the excess pay. It was not that the Florentine *commissarii* and paymasters did not notice what was going on with the poker-faced captains (who indeed made hardly any effort to be discreet), but, as always, "el non haver danari in tempo fa che e' non si possono correggere e' furti" [the fact that we don't receive the money on time makes it impossible to avoid cases of fraud] [226]. Officially, the Ten always strenuously denied the recurrent (biased) accusations of their Venetian allies that the Florentine troops in the League's camp were barely half the number they were supposed to be, yet each time they could not help writing to their *commissarii* anxiously asking for information about the actual size of their forces.

There is little doubt that Giovanni de' Medici's 'orphans' defrauded both their employer and their own workforce on a regular basis and that they did so *grossamente* [greatly]. To be sure, the Italian military enterprisers were a greedy, dishonest and insensitive bunch, and the system itself was fraught with corruption. However, strange and contradictory it may sound, behind the mask of despotic discipline and total arbitrariness, in fact few structures relied more on the creation and maintenance of widespread consent than a 'private' military unit. And the only way people like the captains of the Black Bands could achieve this aim and effectively control their soldiers (rather than just being in command) was to actually 'own' them by controlling the flow of money as extensively as possible.

Had the *condottieri* avoided all 'unauthorized' interference, scrupulously observing their contracts and the payment procedures established by their masters, in the end their honesty would probably have caused much more damage to the whole system than their blatant corruption did. For as even the most demanding Florentine functionary had to admit, when put to the test the Black Bands 'worked' very well, and although the campaign of Naples ended in defeat, they proved to be worth every blackened and *sfogliata* gold, silver and billon coin they had been paid – usually with considerable delay.

Albeit in a strictly 'righteous' way, even the Florentine republic was not above taking advantage of exchange rates that were good for its coffers but not for the pockets of its soldiers. Furthermore, in the *petitione* [petition] that Giovanantonio da Castello actually did submit to the Ten during his controversial mission to Florence as spokesman of the Black Bands in 1527, the captains made it clear that they would not complain about possible brief delays in the arrival of wages, as long as the number of payments – or at least the total amount of money – they were due to receive per year remained constant [227]. The Ten promised to comply, but the fact that the captains felt the need to send a spokesman to

[226] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 4 Dicember 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 490v.

[227] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 12 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 121v.

Florence to present such a *petitione* is in itself revealing. Like any good mercenary, the captains of the Black Bands knew that employers in financial trouble tended to make a rather 'creative' use of cumulative delays.

The first half of the sixteenth century – the period that preceded the so-called 'price revolution' – is generally considered to have been a good period for Italian footsoldiers' wages, which remained at approximately the same level until the end of the century. In theory, the monthly pay would have at least enabled a common soldier of the Black Bands to survive, and it offered quite an alluring profit margin to those specialists (arquebusiers, *corsaletti* and the like) who earned more than a basic wage. In the same years, for example, the average daily wage of a unskilled Florentine worker was 9.2 *soldi* and that of an agricultural labourer 8.5 *soldi*. On the other hand, a non-specialist of the Black Bands, such as a *picca secca* [unarmoured pikeman], could (in theory) count on 12.43 *soldi* per day – 14.43 if he was an arquebusier [228]. However, the majority of urban and agricultural workers were paid daily, while soldiers were paid in a single instalment – two if they received a part of the *capisoldi* in mid month – and could not count on other forms of retribution or benefits beyond those furnished by their captain.

Lorenzo Martelli summarised the difficult situation of the soldiers of the Black Bands during the cold Umbrian winter quite well: "non si può negare che il caso nostro non verta in due extreme necessità, così dalla parte di Vostre Signorie come dalla parte di questi fantaccini, ma la loro è di più importantia quanto a loro, perché non havendo da vivere né da calzare, ché costa loro uno paio di scarpe 5 o 6 giulii, non possono aspectare come possino le signorie vostre havendo da vivere et da calzare et da vestire non obstante che e' si peni a mettere i denari insieme..." [It is undeniable that our present situation exhibits two cases of extreme need: that of your Lordships and that of these footsoldiers; but for them theirs is the more important, because, since they haven't got enough to provide themselves with victuals or footwear, because they have to pay 5 or 6 *giulii* for a pair of shoes, they cannot wait as long as your Lordships, who have clothes and shoes to wear and food to eat while struggling to find the money] [229]. As in the case of the real amount of money actually finding its way into the pockets of the soldiers of the Black Bands on payday, the effective purchasing power of their wages is difficult to estimate, though, as Orazio Baglioni put it, the soldiers certainly suffered because of "grandissima penuria del vivere, scarpe carissime et le paghe corte" [scanty provisions, costly shoes and short wages] [230]. To be sure, the situation was hardly brilliant even in Florence and, apart from being sympathetic, there was little the Ten could do to improve the situation of their soldiers in Umbria. Owing to a series of particulary bad harvests, the failure of the attempts to import wheat from Languedoc and the Papal States, and bad relations with the Sienese republic, the situation of the Florentine grain market was extremely poor. Between August 1527 and February 1528 the price of wheat rose from 2 *lire* and 5 *soldi* to 6 *lire* per *staio* [231] (the Tuscan *staio* – or *staioro* – was a

[228] Cf. G. Parenti, *Prime ricerche sulla rivoluzione dei prezzi a Firenze*, Florence, C. Cya, 1939, R. A. Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence: an Economic and Social History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

[229] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 4 Dicember 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, 125, f. 489r.

[230] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, Montefalco, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 409r.

[231] The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, Florence, 12 February 1528, ASF, Dieci d Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 43, f. 158r.

corn measure corresponding to about 28.861 litres). In August 1527 Lorenzo Tosinghi, Florentine *commissario* of the town of Montepulciano, where two companies of the Black Bands under Barbarossa and Giovanantonio da Castello were later sent in December, had to intervene with emergency measures and subject the victualling of the companies garrisoned in the city to price control. Tosinghi reduced the price of a *libbra* (1 *libbra* = 12 *once* = 339.542 grams) of bread from 2 to 1 *soldo*, while wine fell from 4 *soldi* to 3 *soldi* and 4 *denari* for one *boccale*, and a *fiasco* (which Tosinghi then considered equivalent to 1 1/2 *boccali*) could be bought for 5 *soldi*. A *libbra* of mutton or veal was to be sold for 2 *soldi* [232]. On the other hand, in October 1527 the soldiers of the Black Bands encamped in Umbria could buy a *staioro* of bread for 7 *lire* - which means approximately [233] 2.2 *soldi* for a *libbra* of bread - and a barrel of wine wholesale for 12 *giuli* (14 *giuli* retail price; i.e. at least 8 *soldi* per *fiasco* [234]). In February 1528, a *libbra* of bread sent from Cortona cost the soldiers of the Black Bands 2 *soldi* and 8 denari, but it was a controlled price imposed after long and difficult negotiations. Referring to the people from Cortona, Martelli was the first to admit that "a ci volere salvare che e non perdino o pocho, stimavamo che libbre 3 et once 9 istessi bene al iulio" [to avoid any loss for them, or at any rate little, we reckoned that 3 *libbre* and 9 *once* was enough for one *giulio*] [235], that is about 3 *soldi* and 6 *denari* per *libbra*.

Surviving information about the price of victuals sold to the Florentine troops in the camp markets is unfortunately very fragmentary, but it would appear that things had changed little since the times of the mercenary poet Archilochus, even if they had to consume their basic rations leaning on pikes rather than spears. Bread and wine were the basis of the soldiers' nutritional regime, and Captain Imperiale Cinuzzi, a veteran of the Army of Flanders, considered 1 1/2-2 lb of either bread or biscuit and a *boccale* of wine or beer the minimum daily ration needed to keep a soldier operational while on campaign [236]. However, these were short rations, serving the demands of tactical mobility. Without the addition of expensive protein food such as meat and of oil, salt, vinegar, assorted vegetables, cheese and so on, it could not sustain a soldier for long periods without damaging his morale and health. Even according to approximate calculations, it seems clear that expenditure on food absorbed most – if not all – of the pay of the rank-and-file of the Italian Black Bands.

Nor were other kinds of goods cheap. In the case of the Black Bands, we know for instance that a good pair of shoes, which did not last long and was as necessary as any armament for one who lived on the march, could cost as much as 5-6 *giulii*. Moreover, unless he arrived already fully equipped with his *arme offensive* and *defensive*, a *fante privato* was also expected to refund (at the very least) his captain for the weapons he was given at the moment of enlistment. Obviously enough, the captains wanted to see their investment in military equipment refunded before illness, desertion and fighting began to take their toll. The deduction was considerable and made in a short period of time. When, on January 1528, the captains of the Black Bands considered sending an order to Florence for several hun-

[232] Lorenzo Tosinghi to the Ten, Montepulciano, 8 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive 123, f. 138r.

[233] By saying a *staioro* of bread, Martelli probably meant the bread resulting from the baking process of a *staioro* of wheat.

[234] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 224v.

[235] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 8 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 217r.

[236] Cinuzzi, *La Vera militar disciplina*, vol. I, p. 106.

dred corselets, sallets and pikes, they planned to pay the republic in two or three instalments with deductions from the monthly *capisoldi*, while they in turn "gli riterrebbono a' fanti loro in 2 o 3 paghe" [would deduct them from two or three of the payments of their footsoldiers] [237]. The republic established the price of a pike sent to the camp in Umbria at 20 *soldi* [238], whereas in the same period in Florence an arquebus, bought wholesale by the Ten with all its accessories, cost roughly 10 *lire* [239]. During their stay in Umbria in 1527 the arquebusiers of the Black Bands paid 4 *soldi* for one lb of lead and 16 *soldi* for one lb of gunpowder [240].

When considering the overall situation, it is difficult not to agree with *commissario* Martelli when he asserted, with dismay, that in the League's camp "tanto è possibile tenere costoro (the infantrymen) a questa vita quanto è possibile volare" [it is just as possible to maintain them in this life as it is to fly].

[237] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 7 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 131v.

[238] The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, Florence, 27 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 43, f. 195v.

[239] ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, f. 101.

[240] The Ten to Raffaele Girolami, Florence, 2 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Missive, 99, f. 20v. It is worth remembering that an average *da fante* arquebus fired a ball of about 1 *oncia*, propelled by a charge that weighed slightly less than the ball itself.

2. The Taming of the Black Bands

"In Firenze su per le piaze ci chiamon spadacini, et si fan beffe di noi quando non han bisogno" [241].

Captain Pandolfo Puccini speaking to his men

Giovambattista di Gaspare Soderini [242] (1484-1528), the new Florentine *commissario generale* who arrived at the camp of the Black Bands on 15 February 1528, lacked many of the qualities that make Lorenzo Martelli such a wonderful source of information. More influential and ambitious than his predecessor, and a far less talented writer, Soderini had no love for witty details. In the first place, he resented being demoted, as he was wont to say, to the level of a simple paymaster of unruly soldiers. He was, after all, a nephew of Piero Soderini, *Gonfaloniere* for life of the first Florentine republic. A fierce opponent of the Medici, Giovambattista was exiled in 1512, and again in 1522 after the Orti Oricellari conspiracy, and spent many years living either in Milan or Venice. His brother Tommaso and other influential Florentine citizens like Zanobi Bartolini, Zanobi Carnesecchi and Piero Tosinghi had already refused the office of *commissario in campo*; Giovambattista himself, however, was "tricked' into accepting it by the Ten. When the new *commissario* arrived, the League's army in Umbria was ceasing to exist as an autonomous body, and the days of the lively *consulte* in Todi with the Venetian and French representatives were over. What remained to be done was to police the troops and, unlike Martelli, Giovambattista Soderini shared the traditionally negative attitude to mercenaries of many Florentine *cittadini*. However, the new *commissario*'s choleric temperament and disinclination to compromise, along with his repeated requests for quick repatriation, did not prevent him from being both an acute observer of the political and military situation and a scrupulous guardian of the Republic's interests. In fact he eventually died doing his duty unflinchingly. Though he longed to be in Florence playing the role he felt befitted a member of such an illustrious pro-republican family, Giovambattista's first duty was to prepare the Black Bands to march towards Naples [243], an event that would take him even farther from the Florentine political scene.

No sooner had the *commissario* arrived (15 February) than Azzo da Correggio asked him to keep the Ten's promise to increase the size of his company, a disregarded pledge of which Azzo reminded him again a few days later when asking to be discharged from Florentine service. Azzo pointed out that he clearly deserved more than the other captains and would

[241] "They call us swordsmen in the *piazze* of Florence, and make fun of us, when they do not need us."

[242] According to Benedetto Varchi "era Giovambatista d'animo grande e d'eccellenti virtù, ma superbo e altiero molto... aveva nell'universale, e massimamente essendo stato esule tant"anni, un favore e concorso incredibile [Giovambatista was a man of great spirit and excellent virtue, but very proud and haughty... among the populace he enjoyed high esteem and support, above all for having been in exile for so many years]. *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, p. 359.

[243] For the Ten's *istruzioni* to Soderini, see their letter of 15 February, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 44, ff. 165v-169r.

not put up with being treated in such a way. The commissioner reminded him of the many privileges bestowed on him by Florence: the command of two – his own and Testino's – companies with corresponding remuneration, the *provvisione* during peacetime, and the colonelship. But since the captain persisted with his complaint, Soderini said that it was not up to him to allow his discharge or reject it: Azzo was left free to choose himself whether to stay or to go.

Soderini's apparently unconcerned remarks represented a radical change of approach from the frantic negotiations of his predecessors. Now that the League's course of action was decided and the republic had agreed, albeit against its will and interest, to send its best troops to Naples, Florence was less subject to blackmail from both its allies and its soldiers, and could once again take the initiative. The new *commissario* was determined (too determined, as we shall see) to assert his authority from the start. Azzo himself was left with little option: the army was about to move towards a new, lucrative conflict, so that leaving Florentine service with the Ten's tacit approval but without an official statement would have been a great risk for his career and his *riputatione*. Soderini assured the Ten that, according to the last survey made by *ser* Bernardino (Baglioni's muster inspector) Azzo's company consisted of very good, but very few, soldiers. Had they all been "Orlandi" [Rolands], wrote the *commissario*, they would have counterbalanced their captain's thievery. If allowed to continue like this, the Emilian *condottiere* would soon become as expensive as the captain general himself [244]. Confirmation that Soderini's inflexibility was effective came a few days later when Azzo showed himself once again more than willing to serve his Florentine masters, and his example deterred other commanders from trying to force the *commissario*'s hand. While this setback did not stop Azzo from continuing to demand the *publicatione* of his colonelship, the *commissario* thought the moment was not right for this. His promotion would have made his rival Lucantonio – who in turn was still asking for an *accrescimento* to his company – lose his patience [245].

In the meantime preparations for departure were rapidly going ahead: the Florentine artillery, a few *moschette* that had been used to reduce some small Umbrian castles, was sent back to Florence; Orazio recruited the sappers needed to open the way for the troops; and the Bands' captains continued to recruit soldiers to fill the diminished ranks of their companies.

The first of two serious incidents destined to definitively alter the delicate balance of power between the captains of the Black Bands, the Florentine *commissario* and Orazio Baglioni took place on 2 March when Captain Pandolfo Puccini, accompanied by a group of his arquebusiers, entered the quarters of Giovanni da Colle and, after a brief exchange of insults and accusations, had him killed by his soldiers. Puccini tried to avoid immediate, summary punishment by leaving the camp, followed and protected for a while by his company, but he was eventually overtaken after a few miles by other Florentine troops. Isolated and forced to dismount, the captain defended himself against his pursuers with a pike and kept them at bay until Orazio Baglioni persuaded him to surrender and place himself in his

[244] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Elci, 22 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 239r-240v.

[245] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Foligno, 25 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 242r.

custody – and under his protection. What initially appeared to be a trivial quarrel between soldiers was to become a major political incident because the *commissario* considered the murder of Giovanni da Colle to be by no means the most serious of the many crimes of which he considered the man he called the "seditioso Puccino" [seditious Puccino] to be guilty [246].

A member of an affluent Florentine family, during his youth Pandolfo had been forced to leave the city after murdering a man with a knife (apparently after a quarrel over a woman). Like many other unruly Florentine youths, he began a military career by joining the companies of Giovanni de' Medici who recognized his worth both in the field and in single combat and eventually made him captain of a company. According to Busini, who had known him personally since the days when he seemed to be a person "da poco" [not up to much], Captain Puccini was "superbissimo ma valentissimo, e quasi si assomigliava di cuore al signor Giovanni. Viveva suntuosissimamente, onde eragli necessario rubare le paghe ed altro, come faceva..." [incredibly haughty but extremely valiant, and with almost the same character as *signor* Giovanni. He lived sumptuously, making it necessary for him to steal wages and more, as he did...]; moreover – and for a Florentine this was an important detail – he was an eloquent speaker with a "bellissima voce" [beautiful voice] [247]. At the time of the restoration of the Florentine republic, Puccini was apparently unemployed and lodging on his family's estates in San Giovanni Valdarno with some soldiers [248]. During the troubled days following the expulsion of the Medici from power, Puccini was among the first to write to Florence offering his services to the new regime. He was quickly summoned to Florence by the Ten [249], who at that time were desperately looking for loyal troops and commanders. His and Giovanni da Colle's were the first military *condotte* drawn up by the Republic [250].

During Lorenzo Martelli's tenure of office, Pandolfo had been one of the recurrent thorns in the side of the *commissari*. He was not only highly adept at stealing his soldiers' wages, but even the slightest delay in their arrival (a fairly frequent occurrence) gave rise to spectacular complaints, in the course of which the captain 'assassinated' (figuratively) the commissioner, enumerating with laborious precision the hours of service for which he was owed remuneration [251]. Had Martelli tried to describe them, the Ten would never have believed the "diverse pazie che fa Pandolfo" [the follies of Pandolfo] [252]. However, Giovambattista Soderini was a far less tolerant interlocutor than Martelli. According to the new Florentine *commissario*, Puccini had told him on 28 February, arrogantly and in the presence of the

[246] Soderini's 'indictment' against Pandolfo Puccini: Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Foligno, 4 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, ff. 409r- 410v.

[247] G. B. Busini, *Lettere di Giovambattista Busini a Benedetto Varchi*, Pisa, N. Capurro, 1822, pp. 48-50.

[248] Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, p. 271.

[249] The first list of the Ten was written on the register of the Eight's *missive* on 10 June 1527, f. 63v. The Ten's letter to Pandolfo Puccini was written shortly afterwards (12 June 1527). The Ten to Pandolfo Puccini, Florence, 12 June 1527, ASF, Otto di Pratica, Missive, 49, f. 66r.

[250] 16 June 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, f. 1v.

[251] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 25 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 248r.

[252] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Montefalco, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 251r.

other captains of the Black Bands, that he was a soldier who should be paid punctually every thirty days and, if his pay-day was again postponed, he would lead his company to seek "sua fortuna" [his fortune] elsewhere. Soderini reminded him that he was a Florentine citizen and should therefore be ready to serve the *patria* for free, but this patriotic argument simply prompted an irritated answer from the captain, according to whom it was precisely the *patria* that had sold his family's estates and failed him so many times. Eventually Puccini brought the other captains to Orazio's quarters to make their complaints; after which they returned to Soderini's tent. Pasquino spoke with moderation on behalf of his colleagues, reaffirming their will to serve Florence – a wish that was later confirmed by each one of them in separate meetings. However, Puccini's voice remained a discordant one, for he persisted in talking like a "pazo et cattivo" [mad and malicious person], eventually sending word to Soderini that if he was not paid, he would make the drum beat on the following day and leave the League's camp, followed by one thousand footsoldiers.

Giovanni da Colle's murder was a big enough scandal in itself, but the *commissario* in his report to the Ten emphasized Pandolfo's subversive statements and attitude, pointing out that he had led his company out of the camp *in ordinanza* and had made it fire on other Florentine troops to protect his flight. The unit was brought back to the camp shortly before its captain, whose life was saved only because Orazio, rather than Soderini, arrived on the spot first. The *commissario* suspected that the "seditioso amutinatore" [seditious rabble rouser] was in fact a traitor in Imperial service. According to a number of witnesses Puccini had been telling his men that it was a good time to ask for double pay and thus punish those people who "... in Firenze su per le piaze ci chiamon spadacini, et si fan beffe di noi quando non han bisogno" [call us swordsmen in the *piazze* of Florence and make fun of us when they do not need us] [253].

Initially Orazio, allegedly acting on behalf of certain *homini da bene* (maybe the other captains of the Black Bands) and as an "amico di soldati" [friend of soldiers], went so far as to write to the Ten recommending Puccini to them. The killing of Giovanni da Colle had been a question of honour. According to Orazio, Pandolfo was a *homo da bene* and such things happened frequently among soldiers [254]. However, two days later, when the turmoil that followed the murder had died down and it seemed clear that the *commissario* was determined to cause Puccini's downfall in order to affirm his own authority over the Bands, Orazio wrote to the Ten a letter in a different tone. In it he effectively 'dumped' Puccini, who had surrendered to him personally and had initially been kept under arrest in the fortress of Spelle, near Perugia. The Perugian *condottiere* claimed that Puccini's actions had not been simply rash but also potentially very dangerous, and that the only thing that had prevented him from immediately inflicting on the captain his deserved punishment was the fact that he was a Florentine citizen [255]. Ironically, in the end the fact that Puccini was *della patria* played against him and made him a perfect scapegoat.

Puccini was first interrogated in the Florentine citadel of Cortona on 15 March by the

[253] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Foligno, 4 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 410r.

[254] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, Spelle, 2 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 174r.

[255] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, Villa Vege, 4 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 170r.

Ten's envoy Giovanni Naldini, in the presence of many frightening instruments of torture but without actual torture [256]. The fact that the circumstances of Giovanni da Colle's murder concerned only two of the seven points about which Naldini questioned him, and that the Ten seemed far more interested in the possibility that he was a secret papal or Imperial supporter than in Giovanni's murder must have been a most unpleasant surprise for Puccini [257]. Besides Soderini's fiery accusations, the suspicions of the Ten had their roots in the fact that when Puccini was stationed in Narni in December, he gave hospitality to the runaway hostages from Rome, all enemies of the Florentine republic, and that later in the same month he openly expressed his desire to go and pay homage to the pope in Orvieto [258].

Puccini admittedly only to killing Giovanni da Colle – a deed he considered a necessary and justifiable act rather than a crime – and firmly rejected the other accusations: he was not, nor had he been, in touch with the Imperialists, "et mai non pensò ad alchuna cosa di papa o di Medici" [and he never thought at all about things relating to the pope or the Medici], and had given hospitality to Jacopo Salviati and the others "perché mi pareva fussi mio honore" [because I thought it honourable for me], and, while they were his guests, "altro ragionamento mai mai hebbi di papa, di Medici o d'altra cosa" [I never spoke of anything concerning the pope, the Medici or otherwise] if not the circumstances of their escape from Rome. Puccini claimed that he had never incited the captains of the Black Bands against the *commissario*, whose indignation and unfair hostility – in his opinion – had arisen when Soderini misinterpreted as a threat his disinterested advice about the need to have an extra payment of wages quickly available, given the imminent departure for Naples. He asserted that he was even ready to serve "con la persona sua" [with his person] without being paid, but deprived as he was of his father's possessions, he could not maintain his company; "io gli parlava (to the *commissario*) amorevolmente et per buon zelo et perché amo lo honore della patria et de' mia Signori" [I spoke to him caringly and zealously and because I care for the honour of the *patria* and of my Lordships] and in fact, distribution of extra pay on the eve of a long march was quite a common practice. Above all, Puccini vehemently denied having ever said that one thousand footsoldiers were ready to follow him if he decided to leave the camp of the League [259].

Like many acts of violence committed in military camps, Giovanni da Colle's murder was basically caused by a quarrel about rank and precedence. Besides the obvious difference in *riputatione* between the two (300 soldiers against 150), Pandolfo had always considered Giovanni to be his direct subordinate, since both his men and da Colle's had formerly been

[256] Puccini's letters on the topic and the records of his interrogations in Cortona are kept in ASF, Signori, Dieci e Otto, 73, ff. 60-81. Together with Busini's letters (in *Lettere di Giovan Battista*, cit., pp. 48-51), these papers were Varchi's main source of information on this case – see his *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, pp. 385-400.

[257] The seven questions were: 1. Had he had any negotiation with the Empire? 2. Was he in contact with the pope? 3. Why did he kill Giovanni da Colle? 4. What happened while the four hostages were in his hands near Narni, and what did he discuss with them? 5. Had he really incited the other captains of the Black Bands to mutiny? 6. Was his threat to lead one thousand footsoldiers out of the League's camp genuine? 7. What were the circumstances of his arrest and of his company's march out of the camp? ASF, Signori, Dieci e Otto, 73, f. 79r/v.

[258] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, Elci, 14 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 509r.

[259] Pandolfo Puccini to the Ten, Spelle, 7 March 1528, ASF, Signori, Dieci e Otto, 73, f. 64r-65r.

belonged to a single larger body of soldiers. According to Puccini's testimony, it was he who had entrusted Giovanni with the hundred and fifty extra soldiers that the Ten had decided to give him. Moreover, Puccini had personally inspected da Colle's company on several occasions (finding that he had barely a third of the soldiers he was supposed to have), and up to that moment the drummers of the two units had always 'beaten the drum' together to call the soldiers to the *banca* "a tocchar danari" [to receive their pay]. However, on 2 March da Colle, who had probably been waiting for a favourable circumstance (as the army's imminent departure would be) to assert his independence, sent Puccini's drummer back; "... allora gli dixi: 'Giovanni sempre tu vuoi fare del grande et fai poco honore a me et alla Signoria di Firenze'. Lui mi rispose non havere affare nulla mecho. Allora gli dixi: 'Come tu stai mecho et possoti comandare' et però subito mi rispose: 'Tu menti per la gola', et messe mano alla spada, et perché con lui era 12 o 14 delli sua da Colle li quali mi abbassorno le alabarde, mi ritirai" [then I said to him: 'Giovanni you always want to be grand and you bring little honour to me and the *Signoria* of Florence'. He responded that he would have nothing to do with me. Then I said to him: 'You are with me and under my command', however he immediately retorted: 'You are telling a lie' and reached for his sword, and since he had with him 12 or 14 of his men from Colle who levelled their halberds, I retired]. Puccini had been given the lie and forced to flee in the presence of many *homini da bene*, and, since a soldier without honour and *riputatione* was worth nothing, he felt obliged to go and see Giovanni later that same day, this time accompanied by a handful of his faithful arquebusiers, to force him to a public and humiliating withdrawal of his *smentita* [refutation]. Giovanni, however, refused stubbornly to concede that he was a subordinate, leaving the Florentine captain with no option but to have him killed [260].

Puccini claimed that his aim when he left the camp was not desertion, but to reach the headquarters of the Venetian troops, where he planned to give himself up to the duke of Urbino, who, as captain general of the League's whole army, would grant him a fair trial and protection from Soderini's unfair hostility. When this plan was thwarted, he decided to surrender to another soldier and *homo da bene*: that is, Orazio Baglioni. What confused the situation and placed him in an unfavourable light was that when his men, who were lined up *in ordinanza* as always when they went to the *banca*, saw their captain in danger, they spontaneously decided to assist him. They resolved, in other words, to escort him for a while and protect his flight until he was brought his horse, against his express orders and also after he had placed the whole company in the custody of Giovambattista da Messina, the sergeant-major of the Black Bands. This naturally created an impression of mass desertion and open mutiny [261].

Sent to Florence to plead his case in front of his *Signori*, as he had repeatedly requested, Puccini was tried and found guilty (24 March) by the *Quarantia* tribunal in Florence and sentenced to death. He appealed to the *Consiglio Grande*, and his passionate defence,

[260] Anonymous (presumably a Florentine notary) to the Ten, 15 March 1528, ASF, Signori, Dieci e Otto, 73, ff. 73r-74v.

[261] ASF, Signori, Dieci e Otto, 73, f. 78r. During his subsequent testimony in Cortona, Puccini said that at the moment of leaving the camp he had entrusted his company to Giovambattista da Messina, Lucantonio Cuppano and Azzo da Casalpò.

reported by the historian Varchi [262], moved many of its members to tears, though eventually *raison d'état* prevailed over pity and his appeal was rejected. The *Consiglio* could only quash the *Quarantia*'s verdict, not alleviate it, but this would have amounted to impeaching Giovambattista Soderini and weakening the credibility of the tribunal. Furthermore, since he was not worth *that* much, the unlucky captain was beheaded in the *corte* of the Bargello at the beginning of April.

These legal proceedings were not allowed to hold up the progress of the war. The *commissario* and Orazio Baglioni were being harassed by letters from both the Ten and *monsieur* de Lautrec, who had entered the kingdom of Naples with his troops and was waiting for the arrival of the Black Bands and other allied units before attempting to force the Imperial army to fight in the open field. The four hundred and fifty soldiers left without captains were hastily divided between Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto (250) and Francesco Rustichello (200), a renowned captain with fifteen years experience [263].

The problems of military seniority connected with the re-organisation of the Black Bands kept Soderini busy until the very day of departure, 6 March 1528, of all the Florentine forces (4,400 footsoldiers and 150 light horsemen). In the words of the Ten, they were "una bella et bonissima gente... et per una giornata non hanno paragone in Italia, per essere tutti homini di guerra" [an impressive and very competent band... and in battle they are unparalleled in Italy, since they are all men of war] [264]. Worried about the unavoidable *publicatione* of Azzo's colonelship and the angry reactions of Pasquino and Lucantonio, the commissioner asked the Ten to give the rank of colonel to the other two captains as well as to the count of Casalpò, who (in the commissioner's opinion) was not the only one to deserve it [265]. This time the Ten agreed with Soderini, and their final decision was to appoint three colonels – in spite of Orazio's opposition to Lucantonio's promotion – and leave the commissioner and the Perugian *condottiere* the task of assigning the companies [266]. Unfortunately, the reasons for Orazio's hostility towards Lucantonio are not known, though they probably date from the period when both took part in the unsuccessful defence of Rome.

Owing to a second accident, however, this long-awaited decision of the Ten was never fully implemented. After long days of marching in mountainous and barren territory during the harsh Apennine winter, and having occupied (at the third assault) and brutally sacked the papal town of Cascia, which had rashly refused to billet and give victuals [267], the Black Bands camped in sight of L'Aquila, a city that had already submitted to the authority of the

[262] Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, pp. 391-398.

[263] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Foligno, 4 March, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 410v. Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto in practice already had a company and his situation needed to be made official - mostly to please Orazio Baglioni. Francesco Rustichello was recommended by the duke of Urbino.

[264] The Ten to Marco del Nero, Florence, 8 March, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 43, f. 231v.

[265] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Foligno, 6 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 407r.

[266] The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, Florence, 8 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 43, f. 230v.

[267] Marco del Nero to the Ten, San Severo, 16 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 479r.

League of Cognac and was in the power of the pro-French party. Provoked (according to Soderini) by their commanders, the companies of Azzo and Testino began to grumble, so Orazio was forced to lend Soderini some money (one thousand and fifty *scudi*) to give them a pay. The question was only apparently settled. For when marching near L'Aquila, the Bands started to shout "all'Aquila, all'Aquila, allogia, allogia et danari, danari!" [to L'Aquila, to L'Aquila, lodging, lodging, and money, money!], and headed for the city. When Orazio tried to stop them, the Florentine soldiers promptly levelled their arquebuses at him, threatening his life "senza haverme alcuna reverentia" [without showing me any respect]. The Black Bands entered L'Aquila demanding to be billeted and the captain general had no choice but to follow them with his Perugian troops, occupying the city's *piazza* and hanging four soldiers on the spot. However, the partial sack of L'Aquila – albeit without casualties among the civilians – could not be prevented. On the following day the captain general took possession of the city gate and forced the soldiers to return most of the stolen goods. The Bands gathered *in ordinanza* in the piazza and once again started to grumble about their arrears of wages, being persuaded to leave the city and resume their march only after the commissioner had given out more money to the captains [268]. Had he known about these events, and had he not been at that moment extremely busy trying to keep his neck away from the *Bargello* headsman's axe, captain Puccini would have surely liked to ask Soderini what he now thought of his advice to distribute extra pay before starting the long march to the Kingdom of Naples.

L'Aquila was the League's cornerstone in southern-central Italy, and this serious incident endangered Florence's reputation and standing among its allies. Soderini authorised Orazio Baglioni to inflict the appropriate punishments on the culprits, whoever they were [269]. The captain general decided to take advantage of both Soderini's severity and the Ten's distrust of their troops after the 'Puccini affair'; so, following the *commissario*'s own line of conduct on that occasion, he found Azzo da Correggio and Testino guilty not only of mutiny, but also of treason. According to unspecified (and probably false) information provided by Orazio, the two captains were in contact with the Imperialists and were ready to desert with their companies on the first favourable occasion. By contrast with Puccini's case, the two captains were not arrested and brought to trial. On the same prearranged day Testino was sent off on a sham mission to Lautrec's camp and killed by his escort, while the count of Casalpò was executed during the march "senza alcun tumulto" [without any clamour] [270]. According to Mantuan sources, the helpless Azzo was killed with a blow of a mace to the head and his naked body left on the road with only a *calzetto* on his right foot [271].

Soderini and the Ten [272] gave their approval of Baglioni's strict line of action, but in fact their approval sanctioned the Perugian *condottiere*'s victory over them in the struggle for

[268] On the sack of L'Aquila, see Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 30 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 175r/v. Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 105.

[269] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 21 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 411r.

[270] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 30 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 175v.

[271] Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 181v.

[272] The Ten to Orazio Baglioni, Florence, 17 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 44, f. 57r.

control of the Black Bands. When Soderini tried to appoint two new captains, Francesco Strozzi and Tommaso Gotti (the latter a younger brother of the Bands' sergeant-major), for the two halves of Azzo's company, his authority was openly contested by Baglioni, who overruled him by appointing his protégé Bino Signorelli.

Although many Florentine historians, especially Benedetto Varchi and Bernardo Segni, along with their Risorgimento admirers, have portrayed the proud and righteous Giovambattista Soderini as in control of the troops, the truth of the matter is that from the arrival of the Florentine contingent at the League's camp near Troia on 21 March 1528 until his death under the walls of Naples the only person really in control of the Black Bands was Orazio. After Captain Puccini's arrest (and especially his execution in Florence), and after the violent death of Colonel Azzo da Correggio, the remaining captains of the Black Bands appeared indeed to have been brought to heel, but this had happened almost exclusively to the advantage of Orazio, not of Florence, whose *commissario* found himself deprived of all effective authority. Giovanni's 'orphans' and the Florentine *commissario* had been weakened by long months of reciprocal attacks, to the benefit of the third party concerned.

The captains of the Black Bands were afraid of both Florence and Orazio, with the difference that, while distant from Tuscany and close to the war zone, Orazio was at the height of his powers as captain general and could, besides, take full advantage of his superior personal experience and resources as a military entrepreneur. Availability of capital and the ability to act with ruthless determination, united to good command skills, had always been a powerful combination in the mercenary world, and the Perugian *condottiere* had all of these assets. All the levers of power were firmly in his hands: the *maestro di campo* and the *aguzino* were once again operative; *ser* Bernardino sat at the *banca*; and Orazio could raise funds much more rapidly than the Florentine republic. Shortly before the departure from Spoleto, he made an agreement with some merchants who agreed to supply him with the money needed to pay his Perugian troops during the campaign in southern Italy in return for a bill of exchange payable in Florence with the Ten's guarantee [273]. During the mutiny at L'Aquila, while the soldiers of the Black Bands lined up in the *piazza* were shouting *danari, danari*, Orazio had his one thousand Perugian footsoldiers completely under control and was even able to advance a large sum to the *commissario*. In Montefoscoli (6 April) the ominous cry of *danari, danari* was heard again, but this time Soderini, who was already on very bad terms with Orazio, refused to beg for money again and left this privilege to Marco del Nero, the Florentine diplomatic representative in the camp of the League [274]. The *commissario* was probably right when he wrote to the Ten that (in spite of the claims of his secretary and representative in Florence, Michele Conventini) the captain general and his contacts had insufficient financial resources to support the whole of the Florentine expeditionary force, but what they had was still more than enough to give Orazio the edge over Soderini. Given the distances involved, the regular dispatch of large amounts of cash directly from Florence to its troops in the Kingdom of Naples would have proved difficult

[273] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 6 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 407v.

[274] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 279r. The *condottiere* loaned the ambassador 3,900 *ducati*.

in any case. Between the republic and the *Regno* in 1528 there was either the sea, with all the risks it posed (and we must remember that the Florentine republic had no galleys of its own), or the hostile Papal States, with its angry mobs of peasants and mountain dwellers exasperated by the plundering and destruction caused by the passage of rapacious armies (of both the Empire and the League). To handle the unavoidable delays in the arrival of wages from Florence and avoid the risk of losing cash, the ambassador and the *commissario* would increasingly have to rely on their own initiatives, personal resources and contacts *in loco* – which principally meant Orazio Baglioni and other military entrepreneurs.

To counter the captain general's growing influence and what he viewed as his perfidy, Soderini tried to insist on the literal enforcement of the articles of the *condotta* Orazio had signed (especially on matter concerning the appointment and dismissal of captains). But without success. By the time the Florentine troops joined Lautrec's army, Orazio and Soderini were already refusing to speak to one another; and the situation worsened considerably during the following days, prompting Orazio to declare that either he or the *commissario* would have to leave the League's camp [275]. The situation was so tense and damaging to the city's *riputatione* that the Florentine ambassador Marco del Nero tried to mediate between the litigants and persuade them to reach a compromise: Azzo's company was to be divided in two, with one half remaining under the command of Bino Signorelli and the other under a captain appointed by Soderini. After two days of talks, the proposal was accepted by Orazio but rejected by Soderini. In principle, Marco del Nero agreed with his colleague, for the Perugian *condottiere* was indeed acquiring control of the Black Bands and exceeding the limits of his authority; but what could not be cured had to be endured, and the situation required a compromise [276]. In fact, a few days later Soderini gave in with bad grace, entrusting 200 footsoldiers to the Florentine Captain Bernardo di Giovanni Strozzi (1502-1533), nicknamed *Cattivanza* [277].

However, the matter was only superficially settled. The remaining 'orphans' of Giovanni de' Medici greatly resented Bino Signorelli's appointment as commander of the late count of Casalpò's company [278] and (at least according to Soderini) probably liked even less the fact that Orazio, now that he could no longer persuade the captains to demand more money from Florence or stir up trouble over back pay, was now trying to create a rift between the captains and their workforce by directly inciting the rank-and-file to stage protests [279]. On 16 April ten captains of the Black Bands went "unitamente et insieme" [by mutual consent and together] to Marco del Nero's quarters to speak to the Ten's senior diplomatic representative about the consequences of his arbitration in the quarrel between the captain general and the *commissario* [280]. Soderini (like his two predecessors) had

[275] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 224r.

[276] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Sant"Antonio, 31 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 145r.

[277] ASF, Carte Strozziane, Terza Serie, *pezzo* 35, *Vite degli uomini illustri della famiglia Strozzi* written by Luigi Strozzi, p. 36; *pezzo* 36, *Vite degli uomini illustri della casa Strozzi*, written by Lorenzo di Filippo di Matteo di Simone Strozzi, pp. 248-249.

[278] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Grotta Menarda, 3 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 226r.

[279] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 18 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 230r.

[280] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Badìa di Acerra, 16 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 256r.

promised to please Giovambattista Gotti, the Black Bands" sergeant-major, by giving his younger brother the command of a company as soon as possible. So after Bernardo Strozzi's appointment Gotti vented his anger on both Florence and the captain general, threatening first to leave the camp of the League outright and subsequently refusing to carry out his duties.

Within his field of competence Giovambattista Gotti had few, if any, equals, and at the height of the battle was more the commander of the Black Bands than anybody else. To avoid such an irreparable loss, therefore, each captain was ready to deprive himself of a portion of his own men to create a new company for Tommaso Gotti. However, not even this makeshift agreement could fully satisfy the wounded pride of the Sicilian sergeant-major; moreover, on his part, Tommaso refused to take charge of a company without the unconditional acceptance and blessing (in a manner of speaking) of Orazio, who had instead expressed reservations about him. Giovambattista Gotti persisted in his *ira funesta*, remaining idle in his quarters like a kind of early modern Achilles at the siege of Naples. At the end of April the military operations around the city were already in progress, but the situation within the Florentine host grew steadily worse. When eventually even Orazio openly threatened to leave the League's camp, claiming to have been driven to do this by Soderini's hostile attitude, *monsieur* de Lautrec summoned the *commissario* and Marco del Nero and ordered them to find a way of being able to count on the services of both Orazio Baglioni and Giovambattista Gotti, whom he firmly believed was the best Italian sergeant major. Ambassador Marco del Nero openly took Soderini's side, but once again invited him to be more flexible – for the sake of Florence's *riputatione*. The *commissario* promised to comply with this request; and for his part, Lautrec agreed to persuade Orazio to be more respectful to the Ten's representatives [281].

Then again, the damage was not only to the *riputatione* of the Florentine republic. During the first weeks of the siege of Naples the Black Bands were constantly involved in frequent bloody skirmishes with the Imperial footsoldiers and light cavalrymen, and some of the initial costly setbacks were due to their failure to achieve the necessary degree of coordination: a failure to be attributed to Giovambattista Gotti's absence from the battlefield.

[281] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Capodichino, 28 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 267r.

3. "The Nature of Military and Grand Men": Lautrec's Descent

"*Maledicendo te fortuna ria*
maledicendo el dì chio naqui al mondo
maledicendo la disgratia mia
chio vorei essere nel profondo
tanto è l'affanno e la pena mia
chio non viverò mai più iocondo
è stato la casone del mio errore
per estimarmi troppo gran signore" [282].

Excerpt from the *Lamento de Monsignor Lutrech* – author unknown, 1522

For the French and their Italian allies the campaign of 1527 began in a very favourable way. In September Genoa was recaptured by Andrea Doria, while the army of the League forced Alessandria to surrender; on 5 October the *honte* of Pavia was partially avenged, since the city that had witnessed the defeat and humiliation of Francis I was taken by storm and brutally sacked. But while the Venetian and French armies quickly overran Lombardy, Milan remained firmly in Imperialist hands. After long weeks of skirmishes with the Spanish troops of Antonio de Leyva and diplomatic manoeuvering to persuade Ferrara and Mantua to join the League, Odet de Foix, *vicomte de* Lautrec, marshal of France and captain general of the League of Cognac, established his winter quarters between Parma and Piacenza. There, in view of the expedition against the Kingdom of Naples, he proceeded to reorganize his forces.

Notwithstanding these first important successes, it appears clear that the disastrous results of Odet de Foix's oppressive governorship of Milan (during which he managed to alienate large sectors of the Milanese aristocracy from the French cause) and the crushing defeat suffered at Bicocca in 1522 after he had lost the city to the Imperialists, had taught him very little about the nature of Italian politics and the art of leadership in general. The *seigneur* de Lautrec was still the epitome of the great French noble: haughty and fully aware of this irritating trait – a detail that, in his view, was largely offset by his undeniable merits [283]. In fact, any advantage he derived from his military skills as a strategist, charisma and undeniable personal courage, was frequently nullified by his style of leadership, which was eventually to prove his undoing. Unlike the duke of Urbino, Lautrec was surrounded not

[282] "Curse you, wicked fortune, / curse the day I came into the world, / curse my misfortune, / for I would rather be in the depths. / Such is my longing and suffering / that I will never be joyful again. / The cause of my error was / considering myself too great a man" – *Historia della rotta de Francesi et Svizeri novamente fatta a Milano a la Bicocca con la presa de Lodi et lamento de Monsignor Lutrech et de Svizari*, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze – E.6.5.3, cass. II, n. 32; punctuation is mine.

[283] Among which he, quite understandably, did not mention being the brother of *madame* de Chateaubriant, mistress of Francis I. Famous in military history only for having been beaten at the battle of Bicocca, the figure of Odet de Foix has never been thoroughly studied; on his life, see the outdated and rather apologetic biography written by B. de Chanterac, *Odet de Foix, Vicomte de Lautrec, maréchal de France, 1438-1528*, Paris, Librairie historique A. Margraff, 1930.

by a *consulta* but rather by a *corte*, and like a king, albeit one on a reduced scale, he didn't so much negotiate important matters with his courtiers as issue orders. However, even as a ruler Lautrec was not a particularly good one. Not only was he a centralizer, he always reacted angrily to those with views that differed markedly from his own and rewarded them with his disfavour: a price his subordinates became increasingly unwilling to pay as the campaign progressed. As a result, since he was unable to coordinate everything efficiently and was just as liable to make mistakes as anyone else, the routine administration of the army began to suffer from paralysis and Lautrec progressively lost contact with the real situation of his army.

Nonetheless, Odet de Foix was a competent and charismatic soldier, a French grandee who once again stood high in Francis I's favour. Although his military curriculum and *riputatione* were marred by the defeat of Bicocca, they were still held to be good. He had all the characteristics and virtues that the Florentine leadership believed necessary in a man who was supposed to save the republic not only from its enemies, but also from its Italian allies and, above all, from the man Florence was (allegedly) using its best troops and its last energies to free: the Medici pope. The Ten attached the utmost importance to the success of Lautrec's enterprise. Given France's diplomatic and military weakness, they knew all too well that this was their last chance to halt the spread of Imperial hegemony over most of the Italian peninsula, and to deal with Clement VII, the Medici and their partisans from a position of strength. For this reason, in September 1527 the Ten told Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi [284] (1486-1537), their first envoy to Lautrec's 'court' and a prominent figure in the republican regime, that given "la natura delli homini militari et grandi" [the nature of military and grand men], he was to arrange his "discreti et prudenti motivi, ad renderli più accettabili che sia possibile in conspecto di quello principe, dalla dispositione del quale mediante la divina voluntà si pensa habbi a dependere la preservatione del nostro stato et della nostra universale salute" [discreet and prudent motives, as to render them as acceptable as possible in the sight of that prince, from the disposition of whom – through divine volition – we think will depend the preservation of our state and our universal salvation] [285]. Thanks to Sebastiano del Piombo's beautiful portrait of Antonfrancesco in an oratorical pose, painted in 1525, we can actually imagine the dignified Florentine patrician addressing Lautrec and his court.

Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi's first and main duty was to represent and champion Florence's point of view in the choice of strategy that the League's army would follow during the coming campaign. Lautrec's host could either follow the well-established pattern of the last French invasions of Italy, campaigning in Lombardy and with Milan as its ultimate target, or he could bring the war, for the first time after almost a quarter of a century, back to southern Italy, the place where it had begun [286]. The campaign in Lombardy

[284] Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi was one of the leading figures of the Florentine Republic, going in exile after its fall in 1530. After the small army gathered by the Florentine pro-Republican exiles was defeated by the Florentine troops loyal to the Medici in 1537, Antonfrancesco was captured and brought back to Florence, where he was eventually beheaded for treason.

[285] The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, Florence, 13 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 95v.

[286] In 1525 Francis I had sent the duke of Albany with a large detachment of troops from the camp besieging Pavia to

presented several advantages and was favoured by France's most powerful Italian ally, the Venetian republic.

Florence, on the other hand, decidedly favoured an advance towards Rome and Naples. The Florentine republican leaders thought [287] that in practice it would be impossible to drive the Empire and Spain out of the peninsula; the only realistic hope was to counterbalance Habsburg influence by granting France a strong foothold in the peninsula. However, it didn't matter how vigorously or how many times its Lombard domains were attacked, for the emperor cared little for them. The duchy of Milan was a simply a "stato acquistato" [acquired state] and not an inherited patrimony such as the Kingdom of Naples. There was no more time for half-measures: only a decided attack against the emperor's Aragonese inheritance could force Charles V to concede the liberation of Francis I's sons in exchange for a ransom in money and choose which of his Italian domains was really worth defending – giving up, in the end, Milan. Giuliano Soderini [288] (1491-1554), bishop of Saintes and Florentine ambassador in France, was instructed to remind the Most Christian King how many times he had cherished vain hopes in Lombardy, only to be bitterly disappointed [289]. Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi multiplied his ardent appeals to Captain General Lautrec, urging him to renounce Lombardy in order to go southwards "ad vincere il mondo" [to conquer the world], to give his master the *imperio* that was rightfully his, and to earn the gratitude of the "oltraggiata tanto et sua tanto fedele Toschana" [his much outraged and very faithful Tuscany] [290].

Although he was far more interested in getting back his sons than in restoring a balance of power in Italy, Francis I, who didn't really need to be reminded of the need to break the strategic deadlock, ordered his army to march towards the *Regno* (the Kingdom of Naples), following the line, advocated also by Lautrec and his Milanese secretary Ambrogio da Fiorenza (?-1528) (as phrased by Paolo Giovio) of "combattere Milano a Napoli" [fighting for Milan in Naples] [291].

After the liberation of the pope, and while *monsignore illustrissimo* the captain general pondered on the route the League's army was to follow in its advance on Southern Italy, Florence decided to increase its diplomatic pressure. By the second half of December

take Naples, and in 1526 the galleys of the League landed troops as far as Salerno, but northern Italy always remained the main centre of operations.

[287] The Ten's letter to Alessandro de' Pazzi, appointed Florentine ambassador in Venice, could be considered as a sort of manifesto of the Republic's foreign policy. The Ten to Alessandro de' Pazzi, Florence, 3 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, ff. 13r- 16r.

[288] Giuliano Soderini, son of Paolantonio di Piero Soderini and Margherita di Strozza Strozzi, became bishop of Volterra when he was eighteen, then of Vicenza and eventually of Saintes. Bishop Soderini became ambassador in France in 1527, but after a year asked to be replaced. In 1529 he refused to help the Republic in its dealings with Clement VII. Bishop Soderini was among the Florentine exiles who contributed to the recruitment of the army that was defeated by the Medici forces at Montemurlo in 1537.

[289] The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, Florence, 30 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 78v.

[290] The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, Florence, 24 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 42, f. 102r.

[291] Giovio, *La seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 80r.

Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi was joined by two other Florentine ambassadors: Tommaso Soderini and Marco del Nero. The duty of this formidable diplomatic task force (in which the various factions dominating the Florentine political scene were represented at the highest levels) was to advocate the Florentine cause before Lautrec and persuade him to follow the 'right' route (i.e., the one favoured by Florence) on the way to victory.

From where it was situated, and given its size and the time of the year, three *cammini* [routes] of different practicability were open to the League's army: one led to Tuscany, one passed through the Tiber Valley, and the last followed the Adriatic coast. Quite understandably, the Ten asked their representatives to do everything they could to dissuade Lautrec from choosing the first *cammino*, as the pope had instead asked him to do – allegedly to protect the neutral Papal States from further pointless devastation. In fact, a huge friendly army marching through the Florentine domain – and sacking it as efficiently and brutally as any enemy army would have done – would have made the republican regime even more unpopular than it already was. For the Ten, the second *cammino* was the best choice: after climbing the valley of the river Marecchia (which flowed into the Adriatic sea at Rimini) with a minimum of help from sappers, the army of Lautrec could follow the course of the Tiber from Città di Castello down to Todi, where it could join the residual forces of the allies in Umbria and then choose the best course of action. In this way, the League's army could at any moment bar the way to the Imperialists had they decided to leave Rome and attack Florence, the recurrent nightmare of the Ten. In the end, however, Lautrec decided to follow the *cammino del* Tronto, which followed the Adriatic coast road down to Apulia. Besides being the only route practicable even in winter for the sixty horse-drawn pieces of ordnance that made up the artillery park of his army, it offered Lautrec the chance to outmanoeuvre the Imperial troops – which, as far as he knew, were still refusing to leave Rome until they received their arrear wages in full – and precede them to Naples. Moreover, the Angevin faction was particularly strong among the *baroni* of the Abruzzi and of the Molise, and Lautrec counted on the fact that his advance there would not meet with strong resistance [292]. Yet the winter turned out to be particularly unpleasant, and though the bridges of boats used by the League's army allowed its columns to cross the treacherous *fiumare* of the Adriatic coast with relative safety, the bad weather and intense cold plagued the troops constantly, killing the soldiers by the hundreds.

At the beginning of January, after a final contingent of three thousand Landsknechts (instead of the six thousand Lautrec had been promised) joined them, the troops of the League left Bologna, passed through Romagna and then headed southwards following the *cammino del Tronto*. By that time, only Marco del Nero remained at Lautrec's court as 'resident' Florentine ambassador, following the army of the League during the campaign in the Kingdom of Naples until its disastrous conclusion and his own death. According to the pro-republican Florentine historian Benedetto Varchi, Marco del Nero was "uomo riputatissimo, e amatore del ben comune" [a man of great repute and lover of the common good], and even though he gave too much credit to "profeti falsi, come il frate" [false prophets, such

[292] On the political situation of the *Regno* during the invasion of Lautrec, see C.J.H. Sánchez, *El Reino de Nápoles en el Imperio de Carlos V: la consolidación de la conquista*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2000, pp. 367 ff.

as the friar] (that is, Savonarola), was not compromised with regard to the various factions that dominated the Florentine political scene [293]. Busini, another fervent republican, described the ambassador as "se non valentissimo, almen fedelissimo, e santo, e più che di comunal cervello" [if not very valiant, at least very loyal, and pious, and above average intelligence], and had been considered as the possible successor of Capponi as *Gonfaloniere* of the Florentine republic at the end of the latter's first term of office. Marco del Nero was also very rich and a connoisseur of French customs. He also fulfilled his duties as ambassador with "splendore" [splendour], so while poor Lorenzo Martelli slept on straw, he instead always dressed elegantly, kept an open house and was constantly surrounded by numerous servants. The French greatly appreciated this "religione" [behaviour] of his [294]. Yet, during his stay at Lautrec's court, del Nero's patience, knowledge of French habits and great talent as negotiator were severely put to the test, and not only (as we have already seen) by the contrasts between Orazio Baglioni and Giovambattista Soderini.

In January 1528, just as the army was about to begin its march towards the Kingdom of Naples, Lautrec saw the financial allocations assigned to his troops reduced from one hundred and thirty thousand *scudi* per month, as granted to him by Francis I at the moment of leaving Paris, to sixty thousand *scudi* per month, and for the following three months alone [295]. According to del Nero's sources of information, this drastic reduction was the result of the rivalry between Lautrec and the chancellor of France Antoine Duprat (1464-1535), who was scheming to turn Francis I against the general [296]. Whether a scheme to draw on the bourse of the Italian members of the League or a necessity, the reduction forced Lautrec to turn to his Italian allies: that is, Venice and Florence.

The Florentine ambassador quickly saw that the sums of money he was allowed to offer on the Ten's behalf, and the way in which Florence stuck rigidly to the percentage of one fifth of all expenses the League was expected to sustain, risked alienating the captain general. The Venetian ambassador Piero Pesaro (?-1528), on the other hand, answered Lautrec's requests for money with fine promises – often empty promises, since Pesaro passed off the money Venice had to give to the League as an ad hoc allocation of funds specially made for the occasion – that appeased the French commander as much as Florence's reasonable apologies seemed to irritate him. Another issue that damaged Florence's reputation was the so-called *pratica de'Lanzi*: that is, the clandestine negotiations with the Landsknechts in Imperial service. The military leaders of the League had managed to get in touch with some of the elected representatives of the Landsknechts in Rome, who had allegedly declared their willingness to leave the emperor's service and go back to Germany in return for a payment of a hundred and sixty thousand *scudi*. Marco del Nero tried to persuade Ambrogio da Fiorenza, Lautrec's Milanese secretary, of the state of exhaustion in which Medici rule had left his city, but *messer* Ambrogio replied that "ciaschuno si haveva a sforzare" [everybody had to exert himself], and that on this occasion Florence could not content itself with paying one fifth of the expenses. Venice, Florence and France were each

[293] Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, p. 356.

[294] Busini, *Lettere a Benedetto Varchi*, cit., pp. 32-33.

[295] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Recanati, 4 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 360r.

[296] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Ancona, 29 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 157v.

to contribute a third of the required sum. In fact, because of Lautrec's financial difficulties, the two republics were also expected to advance the French share of the burden – a gesture for which the two republics would (eventually) be reimbursed, but which brought the figure the Florentine republic was expected to scrape together to eighty thousand *scudi*. Lautrec simply refused to accept all Marco del Nero's excuses and, "faccendo... doglienza della mia scarsità" [complaining... about my stringency] in front of the Venetian ambassador and *messer* Ambrogio, ordered the three of them to have a meeting and find a solution to the impasse, so that he could give more precise instructions to the marquis of Saluzzo, who was conducting the negotiations with the Imperial Landsknechts [297].

At this point it appeared clear, and not only to Marco del Nero, that Florence's reasonable attitude was out of place. When dealing with monsieur de Lautrec, appearances were as important as facts. Ambrogio da Fiorenza approached Marco del Nero as a friend, and tried to explain to him that the best approach was to ingratiate Lautrec immediately by acceding to his requests, after which the ambassador could then withdraw these terms and plead his masters' opposition. "A pena s'era partito il detto messer Ambrosio da me" [As soon as the said messer Ambrosio had left], Marco reported, he stumbled into "un altro di questi di corte" [another courtier], one of Lautrec's confidants. Even though he was acting on his master's specific instructions, the French courtier addressed the Florentine ambassador, again, "come da sé" [as though by his own initiative] and as an "amico" [friend], expressing Lautrec's discontent with Marco's prudent attitude in comparison with that of the Venetian ambassador who, "offerendo gagliardamente" [by offering generously], allowed Lautrec to see Piero Pesaro's goodwill. Del Nero replied that during the campaign Lautrec would probably come to appreciate the modest but reliable help offered by Florence "che di chi forse ha tanto largheggiato" [more than that from those showing such largesse] [298].

In an attempt to remove doubts about Florence's loyalty and defend the city from the false accusations spread by the marquis of Saluzzo, the Florentine ambassador decided to talk directly with Lautrec, "sendo serrati soli in camera" [in the privacy of his chambers]. The captain general did not deny that "più volte et più di uno" [on several occasions a number of people] had attempted to persuade him of the republic's bad faith, but without success. Instead, he tended to believe that, after fourteen years of Medicean domination, the representatives of the republican ruling class were somewhat inexperienced in affairs of state. If he had frequently seemed angry with Florence, it had been for its sake and to persuade him and the Ten to do what was necessary to preserve the city. Del Nero admitted that without the Medicean tyranny there would have been "più huomini, et più affinati nell'esercitio dello stato" [more people more experienced in running the state], but replied that many of those who had learned that craft before 1512 were still active, while the young ones made up for their lack of experience with their zeal [299].

However, Lautrec wanted more than money from Florence: he wanted the Black Bands to follow him in his invasion of the Kingdom of Naples. Unwilling to see its best troops cross the Apennines and leave the city without protection from attacks that could come not

[297] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Fermo, 7 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 349v.

[298] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Fermo, 7 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 345r.

[299] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Teramo, 14 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 314v.

only from the Imperialists but also from Clement VII, Florence had opposed delaying tactics to the captain general's increasingly pressing and explicit request. Yet on the eve of the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples Lautrec was running out of patience as well as money. When, on 31 January, Lautrec confirmed to Marco del Nero his firm intention to unite what remained of the duke of Urbino's army with his own as soon as possible, and the Florentine ambassador once again illustrated the reasons for Florence's reluctance, he dismissed them as nonsense, snapping that he was commander-in-chief of the League, and that the Ten were obliged by the articles of the League of Cognac to entrust their troops to him whenever the League needed them. Lautrec then turned to Azzo da Correggio, who was there on behalf of Orazio Baglioni, and told him to carry the following direct order to the captain general of the Florentine infantry: that as soon as the Imperial army had left Rome to approach the Kingdom of Naples, "ad ogni requisitione del marchese (of Saluzzo)" [at every request of the marquis] the Perugian *condottiere* was to bring the Black Bands to join the main body [300]. This was indeed a crucial moment, for Orazio had decided not to go to Lautrec's camp because he did not want to receive that order in person, and relations between Florence and the marquis of Saluzzo were very tense. By issuing such an order in public, overriding both the Ten and their representative, Lautrec had damaged their reputation and *dignità*. Not even during the worst "battle of cursed wit" had the duke of Urbino dared to challenge the republic's authority openly. Although this caused major worries in Florence, Marco del Nero reassured his masters: those who frequented Lautrec's court were used to such things and had probably hardly noticed the episode; "et se si havesse a tener conto di questi particolari, ci haremo a contristare troppo spesso. Bisogna, con Sua Excellentia, tollerare et fare vista di non vedere né udire quel che dispiace" [and if we had to pay attention to all these details, we would be too often displeased. It's necessary, with His Excellency, to accept and pretend not to see or hear what is displeasing] [301]. In their turn, the Ten reminded del Nero that with the French he had to be "più largo" [more liberal] with his words, and not to stand upon his dignity all the time, as instead was appropriate with the Spaniards [302].

On 10 February the army of the League reached the river Tronto, which marked the southern border of the Papal States on the Adriatic side, and began the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples. Initially the opposition was minimal. The garrisons and forces of the barons faithful to the emperor were either expelled or they simply withdrew and gathered together in a few tenable strongholds in Apulia, while the representatives of the cities on his army's route fell over one another in their haste to pay homage to Lautrec [303]. In this way they complied with the decree he had issued at the end of January, in which he promised a retroactive pardon for the crime of lèse-majesté to those who greeted the League's troops as friends and the abolition of all taxes imposed by the Aragonese rulers after the expulsion of the Angevin kings.

[300] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Recanati, 31 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 167v.

[301] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Ascoli, 11 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 339v.

[302] The Ten to Marco del Nero, Florence, 15 February 1528. Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 43, f. 170v.

[303] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., p. 1914.

Yet Marco del Nero was not easily swayed. Unlike the ambassadors of the other Italian powers, and inexperienced as he was in military matters, he was unenthusiastic about the quality of Lautrec's army. And his worries were shared by the Ten. The host was (on paper) huge, and if the diligence with which it was being run had been equal to its forces, it would have ensured, "per discorso humano" [as far as human intellect can fathom], that victory was close at hand [304]. However, an enormous number of camp followers crippled the already inefficient logistics of Lautrec's army. According to the Mantuan ambassador, the host of the League could count on 21-22 thousand "combatenti" [combatants], without counting those who followed the army without actually being counted and paid: these amounted to more than fifty thousand, "cosa quasi incredibile" [as incredible as it sounds], and occupied an area of sixty miles [305]. The lack of discipline among the troops was appalling as usual, but what worried the ambassador was the atmosphere of carelessness that seemed to permeate the army. At the end of February no one knew where the troops under the command of the marquis of Saluzzo, Orazio Baglioni and *provveditore* Pisani were located. Apparently, Lautrec believed that he could achieve all his goals by force of reputation alone [306].

Nor was Florence satisfied. According to the Ten's informers, by the end of February 1528 the effective strength of the League's main body had dwindled to twelve thousand foot and four hundred lances of heavy cavalry, which, untried as they were, were not enough to assure the defeat of the Imperialist army, which was not only victorious but also lucky. Moreover, "la consuetudine degli Imperiali è sempre stata d'accrescere le forze su' bisogni. Il contrario hanno sempre fatto i Franzesi" [the custom of the Imperialists has always been to increase their forces according to their needs. The French have always done the opposite] [307]. According to the estimates of the Ten the Imperial army amounted to five thousand Landsknechts, four thousand Spanish and two thousand Italian footsoldiers, all veterans "di tanta bontà et virtù che tutta Italia ne trema" [of such great valour and skill that all of Italy fears] [308], flanked by fifteen hundred light and heavy horsemen. Given these premises, the only real asset left to Lautrec's largely untried army was its artillery, and del Nero believed that the veteran troops once under the command of the duke of Urbino, and especially the Black Bands, would prove decisive.

To make matters worse, two events in February forced the French captain general to reassess his strategy. The expedition of the League's fleet, launched against Sicily on December 1527, had been diverted to Sardinia by bad weather and contrary winds (see Appendix 4). There, in exchange for a handful of strategically unimportant coastal strongholds, admiral Andrea Doria lost a sizeable portion of his fleet's precious manpower and wore out his galleys. Badly needing rest and refitting, the fleet of the League had to disband shortly after its return to the Florentine harbour of Leghorn at the beginning of February.

[304] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Termini, 29 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 352r.

[305] Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 25 February 1528, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 26.

[306] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Serracapriola, 2 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 424r.

[307] The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, Florence, 1 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 43, f. 210r.

[308] The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, Florence, 2 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 43, f. 206r.

As a result, while the Imperialist forces on the mainland could count on reinforcements and provisions from Sicily during the coming campaign, it would be months before the League could once more deploy its otherwise decidedly superior naval forces.

The second blow was attributable not to the unpredictable *fortune del mare*, but rather to the ill will (from the Florentine point of view) of the pope. The Ten and their ambassadors in Italy and Europe had repeated (ad nauseam) to all those allies who urged them to normalize their relations with His Holiness, that though they might disagree, in the end the Florentine republic would not be the only one to pay the price of Clement VII's ambitions and duplicity. Since his liberation the pope had remained neutral, but in his neutrality he pursued only his own interests and those of the house of Medici, which, at that particular moment, were served best by the Empire. For Clement VII it was better to be indemnified by Charles V, who had triumphed so often over events and still needed him, because he wished to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor, than to be saved by Francis I, whose main concern was to free his sons. Moreover, once Lautrec had started his advance, the pope could not risk arousing the wrath of Charles V by denying his generals the money they needed to regain control of their army and leave Rome before the French captain general could arrive at a poorly-defended Naples before them. When the news that the Imperial army had left the Holy City on 17 February and was marching towards the *Regno* reached the League's camp, Lautrec was furious. He felt (quite rightly) betrayed by the pope, as an almost certain victory was snatched from his hands and consigned to the uncertain fortunes of war. Needless to say, del Nero did not fail to remark to the captain general "quanto era suto da amico / / il colpo che gli haveva riservato il papa \ \" [how amicable had been / / the blow the pope had reserved to him \ \], and it was probably not without a touch of personal satisfaction that the ambassador claimed to be now "certo che Sua Excellentia non sarebbe hora del medesimo animo a confortare le Signorie Vostre a mandargli oratore" [certain that His Excellency would not be of the same mind in trying to persuade Your Lordships to send him (the pope) an ambassador] [309].

A quick advance of the League's army towards Naples was now out of question, and Lautrec was forced to lead the army more deeply into the *Regno* than expected. After their exit from Rome, the vanguard and 'battle' of the Imperialist army had marched through the Ciociaria province of the Papal States (sacking the town of Valmontone along the way), reached Caserta and then headed towards Benevento to shield Naples. The rearguard, which left what remained of the Holy City a few days later, instead crossed the Apennines at Venafro, and after reaching first Isernia and then Campobasso made an attempt to prevent the main body of the army of the League from spreading onto the vast *Tavoliere* [plateau] of Apulia by occupying the Serracapriola pass. However, the four thousand Spaniards under the command of Juan de Urbina arrived too late, for Lautrec and his troops had crossed it in the early days of March, so he withdrew towards Benevento to join the main body of the Prince of Orange's army. Pedro Navarro (1460-1528) and his Gascon troops spearheaded the advance of the League's army, often acting as a separate body and following inland roads parallel to the path taken by the bulk of the army. The Gascons

[309] Marco del Nero to the Ten, San Severo, 6 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, ff. 425v-426r. Cf. with Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1913-1914.

forced the Imperialists to retreat from L'Aquila; and, seldom losing contact with the only noticeable body of Imperial troops of the area, led by Giovanni Caracciolo (1487-1550), prince of Melfi, they stormed and devastated the town of Capistrano (on this occasion a young captain of Navarro's *colonnello*, the future *maréchal de France* Blaise de Montluc, was badly wounded in his left arm) [310], expelling the enemy from Celano, Lucera and eventually Foggia. Relations between Lautrec and the famous master engineer were not good, but the low-born and short-tempered Count Navarro was one of the few people whose support the captain general dared not alienate [311]. The history of Navarro's career coincides with the history of the Italian Wars and its tactical and technological innovations. He was a "biscaglino d'acutissimo ingegno, con la faccia nera e da villano" [Biscayan of acute intellect, with a dark complexion and the face of a peasant] and always dressed as a common soldier [312]. He had started his career as a groom to Cardinal Juan of Aragon and then risen to become one of the best known and most highly esteemed soldiers of his time. His mastery of defensive-offensive tactics that resorted to the combined use of gunpowder weapons and earthworks and also of siegecraft – thanks to the explosive mines he had helped to perfect – made him an extremely useful factor in any battle or siege. Furthermore, while in Spanish service under Consalvo de Cordova during the first phase of the Italian Wars, Navarro had already contributed to breaking the defensive system of Naples, then in French hands [313].

The reason for rushing to secure the Capitanata province in northern Apulia was a practical one: March was the month when it was possible to collect the toll on the transhumance of the flocks of sheep from the pastures of Apulia to those of Abruzzi. Each year this tax could yield between eighty and one hundred thousand *ducati* [314]. In fact, many of the wealthy citizens in the key city of L'Aquila had sided with the pro-French party precisely to assure the return of their flocks, at that moment still in Apulia. It would also have been a real blessing for Lautrec, for according to the estimates of the Florentine and Venetian ambassadors, by early March he was left with enough money to pay for only one more month of 'vigorous' war. In the event the army of the League did succeed in taking control of the area, but the revenues of the great *dogana* and the other revenues of the Kingdom of Naples turned out to be – because of the war – considerably less (half, roughly) than expected.

On 7 March Lautrec received confirmation that the Imperial army was in the town of Troia. According to the reconnaissance made by Navarro, the Prince of Orange could count on five thousand Landsknechts, five thousand Spaniards, three thousand five hundred Italians and two thousand light horsemen (but no artillery). Lautrec decided to assem-

[310] Montluc, *Mémoires de Messire Blaise de Montluc*, cit., vol. XXII, pp. 56-63.

[311] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Lanciano, 24 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 286v. Cf. with Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., p. 1914.

[312] L. Santoro, *Dei successi del Sacco di Roma e guerra del Regno di Napoli sotto Lotrech*, Naples, P. Androsio, 1858, p. 101

[313] Navarro was captured by the French after the Spanish defeat at Ravenna (1512) and, having waited in vain to be ransomed for what he considered a reasonable period of time, he decided to offer his services to the king of France.

[314] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Ascoli, 11 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 333r.

ble his troops in Lucera and Foggia, where he was joined by the troops of the marquis of Saluzzo: more or less one thousand foot and one hundred lances of heavy cavalry. There he received news that the companies of men-at-arms sent by the marquis of Mantua and the duke of Ferrara (amounting respectively to eighty and one hundred *homini d'arme*) were about to arrive in the League's camp. Despite the fact that there was still no precise information about the location of the Venetian and, above all, Florentine troops, which were still preparing themselves as the marquis of Saluzzo was leaving Foligno, "//mostrasi Sua Excellentia et tutte le genti molto volenterose al combattere, parendo loro essere superiori per ogni conto, et maxime per l'artiglieria della quale i nimici al tutto mancono, et nel campo della Lega compariscono ogni giorno nuove genti\\" [//His Excellency and all the troops show their desire to fight, seeming to be superior in every way, above all on account of the artillery, which the enemy lacks completely, and new soldiers appear in the League's camp every day\\] [315]. Already on 6 March Lautrec had claimed he was willing not only to accept an offer of battle whenever an offer was made by the enemy, but even to issue the invitation himself, whenever he saw a favourable occasion. Six days later, after establishing his logistic base in the town of San Severo (where he also left most of his army's camp followers), the captain general left Lucera at the head of his troops and camped five miles from the walls of Troia [316].

The next day the Imperialists, who were also waiting for substantial infantry and, especially, artillery reinforcements from Naples, came out of the town and encamped before sunset on top of a hill outside Troia that dominated the enemy camp. On 14 March the army of the League moved forward, arrayed, according to the Mantuan ambassador, in three squadrons: one made up of Gascons along with the French (3,500 in total), one of three thousand Swiss together with four thousand Italians, and one of eight thousand (more likely six thousand) Landsknechts [317], which 'offered' battle as it manoeuvred around the hill where the Imperialists were positioned. After a large-scale but brief skirmish on the plain, the three squadrons (followed by the cavalry) "quasi ad un tempo" [almost at the same time] took up position on the top of the other hill dominating the plains around Troia, higher than the enemy's hill. From there – the valley was barely half a mile wide – the artillery of the League cannonaded the Imperialists for half an hour while, on the plain below, the light horsemen of Ferrante Gonzaga (1507-1557) engaged in a sizeable skirmish with the League's men-at-arms that eventually involved over five hundred horsemen on either side, "e ivi con tanto ordine erano condotte queste genti che era cosa grande" [and the order with which these troops were led was such that it was a great spectacle]. The Imperial light cavalry held its own well until, ironically, it was put to flight by

[315] Marco del Nero to the Ten, San Severo, 11 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 469v.

[316] On the quasi-battle of Troia, see also Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, pp. 49v-52r; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1915-1918; *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España* (from now on CO.DO.IN.), Madrid, Academia de la Historia, 1842-1896, vol. XXXVIII, pp. 494-496; Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, cit., pp. 79-82. According to du Bellay the army of the League, vanguard, battle and rearguard marched "tout d'un front", that is not in echelons but in line and at its sides each battalion (deployed in this order: Landsknechts, Swiss, French, Gascons, Italians) was supported by a *trouppe* [band] of men-at-arms.

[317] Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 15 March, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 173v.

a decisive attack from the Mantuan *homini d'arme*, who had arrived in the League's camp the day before, sent by Marquis Federico Gonzaga – the elder brother of Ferrante, who on this occasion lost his standard. After remaining master of the field and above all after ascertaining that the Imperialists were unwilling to fight a pitched battle, Lautrec "prese lo alloggiamento designato, con grandissimo onore de la Legha" [took the designated position, bringing great honour to the League] [318]. In addition, the cannonade eventually forced the Imperialists to leave their camp and withdraw, some taking up position immediately beyond the range of the French artillery, others going to Troia, "con loro danno et vergognia" [to their disadvantage and shame] [319].

In spite of the numerical superiority of the League's troops and the total lack of ordnance on the Imperialist side, which was particularly serious if compared to the formidable French artillery train, many of his generals in the *consiglio* presided over by the prince of Orange had cast their vote in favour of fighting a pitched battle. Eventually, however, the followers of the more traditional delaying tactics prevailed, led by the army's experienced *Maestre de Campo* Fernando de Alarcón (1466-1540), who insisted on the need to delay the moment of the battle as much as possible when fighting against the French, "porque les faltaba (to the French) al fin la furia que al principio tenían" [because in the end they lacked the fury that they initially had]. In the last letters they had received, the emperor himself had ordered his generals to play for time and wait for the reinforcements he would send them [320]. So the prince of Orange ordered his army to fortify the camp and carefully observed the progress of events.

In this, Philibert de Châlons' task was facilitated by the fact that the two hosts were encamped so close that the soldiers of each army could see what the others were doing. Clearly this situation could not last for long, mostly because the two armies were quite literally at one another's throats. After placing the League's new *alloggiamento* [camp] between Troia and the Apennines (and Naples), Lautrec directly threatened the Imperialists' lines of supply, but at the same time the Imperialists, who positioned themselves between the enemy camp and San Severo, presented a similar menace to his. For almost a week, from 15 to 20 March, in the attempt to control the plains around Troia, the men-at-arms, light cavalrymen and stradiots of both sides fought a series of skirmishes which, because of the absence of infantry (and particularly of arquebusiers), became an "honorato più tosto che sanguinoso spettacolo" [honourable rather than a bloody spectacle]. There, wrote Giovio, if one followed the plumed helms and colours, one could see how good a knight was with the lance and sword. However, there were also a few major violations of chivalrous behaviour. For instance, a Spanish captain of light cavalry, who took part in a skirmish too elegantly dressed and (probably) with the wrong combination of colours, was mistaken for the prince of Orange and "i nemici veggendolo così ben vestito... l'uno a gara dell'altro gli furono adosso, et l'amazzorno" [the enemy seeing him so well dressed.... vied with each other to be the first to reach him, and killed him] [321]. According

[318] *Ibid.*, f. 174r.

[319] Marco del Nero to the Ten, San Severo, 16 March, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 479v.

[320] CO.DO.IN., cit., XXXVIII, pp. 494-495

[321] Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 51v.

to Ferrante Gonzaga, captain general of the Imperial light cavalry, "di continuo siamo alle mani insieme con bellissime scaramucce. Attendesi in breve la giornata" [we are continuously engaged in very fine skirmishes. The battle is expected shortly] [322]. The French *gendarmes* performed well in the open field, but showed all their limitations and lack of discipline when they were asked to coordinate their actions with those of the other cavalry forces, such as the Venetian stradiots [323]. The weather was extremely cold, rainy and windy, and every night the Spaniards, following their usual tactics, launched mock attacks and caused the alarm to be sounded in the League's camp. Since the beginning of Troia's stalemate many expert observers had noticed that neither they nor the Imperial Landsknechts were living up to their great reputation [324]. But all were convinced that the battle was imminent, and that it was just a matter of time before one of the two armies decided either to retreat or to attack the entrenched positions of the other. Everything depended on whose reinforcements arrived first.

This specific question tormented Marco del Nero much more than others. After the arrival of the marquis of Saluzzo, the failed arrival of the Black Bands was not only inexplicable, but also increasingly embarrassing, and not only to him. Where were they? Lautrec could speak of nothing else in the ambassador's presence. "Troppo benefitio farebbono le genti di Vostre Signorie, se le ci fussino" [How beneficial Your Lordships' troops would be, if they were here!], cried out Marco del Nero already on 7 March [325]. Nine days later the Florentine ambassador received information that on 9 March the Bands were resting in Montereale (about 15 miles from L'Aquila). All further attempts to locate the Black Bands were frustrated by the bad weather, the impassable Apennine roads and the desperate and infuriated peasants who killed all the stragglers, messengers and scouts they could find. "Horamai sarà facil cosa che arrivino dopo il fatto" [By now it's probable that they (i.e. the Black Bands) will arrive after the event], that is, after the battle, and "da esserci a non esserci quelle, può risultare la vittoria, o esser vinti" [their being here or not being here could result in victory – or defeat]. For Lautrec, the Florentine forces, "delle quali si intende li inimici temano et costoro confidano assai" [whom we know the enemy fear and whom these people (the League) strongly count on], represented the element that could tip the balance of the forces around Troia [326]. Marco del Nero could only agree, especially after seeing how much the enemy commanders used not only force, but also shrewdness – a virtue "della qual poco si vagliono i nostri" [ours exploit little] [327]. Since the captain general "/ / resta di lui malissimo contento\\" [/ / is very disappointed in him\ \], Marco del

[322] Ferrante Gonzaga to his mother Isabella d'Este, 20 March, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 176r.

[323] Venetian *Provveditore agli Stradioti* Andrea Civran to his brother Cristoforo, in Sanuto, *I diarii*,cit., XLVII, pp. 137-138.

[324] Giovio, La *Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 51v; Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 15 March, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 174r/v.

[325] Marco del Nero to the Ten, San Severo, 7 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 456r.

[326] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 479v. See also Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 51r; Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, cit., vol. XVIII, pp. 82-83.

[327] *Ibid.*

Nero decided to keep a low profile and remain in San Severo with the camp followers, away from Lautrec's court, even if this meant leaving the captain general alone in the camp with the papal ambassador and vanifying the results of weeks of laborious diplomatic activity.

However, even in the absence of del Nero, Lautrec "/ / si duole a cielo et con parole di troppa indignatione per la tardità di quelle Bande... et d'essere suto da me ripieno di una speranza\ \" [/ /complains to the high Heavens and with words of great indignation about the delay of those Bands... and about my having filled him with hope\ \] [328]. The Florentine ambassador was afraid that, in case of defeat, everybody would blame Florence, whereas, in case of victory, the city would be seen as guilty of failing to contribute to it. The arrival in the camp (on 21 March) of the Black Bands was both a great relief to Marco del Nero and a remarkable boost to Florence's image. As they marched through the League's camp *in ordinanza*, the Black Bands deeply impressed Lautrec [329] and the other observers: "ozzi le Bande Negre condotte dal signor Oratio Baione sono agionte in campo, et è una bellissima et capata gente, et di numero sono tremila e cinquecento fanti, che non manca uno come se dice, che sono a gran subsidio e favore di questo esercito, e di che facevano grande existimatione gli Cesarei" [today the Black Bands led by *signor* Orazio Baglioni have reached the camp, and it is a fine, select body of men, three thousand five hundred footsoldiers strong, with not one missing as was said, who are of great support and aid to this army, and who have been highly praised by the Imperialists] [330]. The good impression left by the Bands was reaffirmed some days later (on 28 March) when *provveditore* Pisani arrived with less than one third of the 6,500 footsoldiers he had claimed to have, and was received with "poco romore et con manco satisfactione" [little fanfare and less satisfaction]. On the other hand, Lautrec, along with his court, was "più contento un giorno che l'altro delle Bande di Vostre Signorie, et non fa risparmio... di laudarsene" [happier every day that passes with the Bands of Your Lordships, and continually... rejoices in them] [331]. However, it needs to be added that del Nero failed to mention that the 1,000 Landsknechts of the Venetian contingent in Umbria, led by *colonnello* Count Antonio Maria Avogadro from Brescia, had joined Lautrec's army at least by the first days of February 1528.

The approach of the Black Bands, sighted by the scouts of both armies on 20 March, probably forced the Imperial commanders to reconsider their tactical situation. The arrival of such a large and highly-reputed unit of *fanteria vecchia* in the League's camp considerably narrowed the residual margin for manoeuvre of the Habsburg troops – and their stay in Troia became pointless, if not dangerous. At that point, it was almost unthinkable for them to take the initiative, and even though after the disaster of Bicocca Lautrec would have hesitated to attack another entrenched position, this time the situation was very different.

[328] Marco del Nero to the Ten, San Severo, 19 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, ff. 483v-484r.

[329] Marco del Nero to the Ten, date unknown (23-24 March 1528), ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 365r.

[330] Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 21 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 181v.

[331] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Leonella, 28 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 150r.

Moreover, the logistical situation of the Imperialist army was becoming unbearable, and it had much to lose: the fabulous plunder of the sack of Rome had to be protected. So they broke camp that night, leaving Troia and heading for Naples with most of their *bagagli* and without any commotion. Given the proximity of the two armies, this furtive retreat was remarkably successful (the enemy realised what had happened only when it was too late), but it also dealt a considerable blow to the reputation and morale of the Imperial army, and boosted the spirit of the League's troops. On 24 March Ferrante Gonzaga assured his brother the marquis that, after joining the reinforcements sent from Naples in Ariano (the much-needed artillery, six thousand foot soldiers and two hundred men-at-arms), the Imperial army was once again ready to march against the enemy "con tanto di buon core come andassimo a combattere con tante femine" [with as much enthusiasm as if we were going to do fight against so many women] [332]. The real situation, however, was different, for after Ariano the Imperialists continued their strategic retreat to Benevento. According to the reports of the League's scouts, the Imperialists marched "molto timidi, e non parevano quelli valorosi... e tutti sotto sopra al meglio che Dio gli mostrava caminavano" [timidly, and did not seem so valiant... and were all marching in disarray as best as God would permit them] [333]. In Benevento, the prince of Orange met Don Hugo de Moncada (1470-1528), who had been acting as Imperial lieutenant of the Kingdom since the death of the viceroy Lannoy. Moncada tried to persuade the captain general to give battle before the enemy could enter and lay waste the fertile plains of the *Terra di Lavoro*. However, the prince and his *consiglio* rejected this option, just as they rejected the idea of arraying their troops in defence of the three passes of Tripalda, Dugenta and the Caudine Forks [334]. The outcome of the campaign and the fate of the *Regno* would be decided at Naples and nowhere else.

After Troia, Lautrec refused to follow the advice of many of his staff officers, who urged him to pursue the enemy immediately at least with the cavalry. Instead he accepted Navarro's recommendation that, in view of the impending siege of Naples, the army's backline and supplies should be secured by reducing all the remaining Imperial strongholds between there and the capital. As the famous master engineer put it, "ayant pris le reste du Royaume, il auroit la ville la corde au col" [once he had taken the rest of the Kingdom, he would have the city with a noose round its neck] [335]. Lautrec led his army southwards to Leonessa on the river Ofanto, between Ascoli Satriano and Melfi, into what is today Basilicata. After the bloody example given by the Gascons and the Black Bands at Melfi, where the prince of Melfi put up a strong resistance (see Appendix 5), both Barletta and Trani opened their gates and the only Spanish garrison in the area, that of Venosa, surrendered to Navarro unconditionally. By the end of March, when the army of the League left its camp on the river Ofanto and started its march on Naples, in Apulia only Manfredonia and Brindisi remained loyal to Charles V.

[332] Ferrante Gonzaga to the marquis of Mantua, Ariano, 24 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 177v.

[333] Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 21 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 181r.

[334] CO.DO.IN., cit., XXXVIII, pp. 496-497

[335] Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, cit., vol. XVIII, p. 82.

While the army of the League proceeded towards Naples at an average of eight miles per day, its light cavalrymen were sent ahead to re-establish contact with the enemy and harass it, but, as always, their skills in tactical reconnaissance left much to be desired, since they sent back little or no intelligence to the main body [336]. In fact, unlike the Imperial host, the army of the League did not have a large body of tactical light cavalry because the French *archers* fought as a part of the *lances* of heavy cavalry and the unruly Venetian stradiots were specialized in "scorte et pizzicamenti" [escorts and forays]. This left the responsibility to the Italian *cavalli leggieri* of Valerio Orsini and Girolamo da Silva, together with the light horsemen under the command of Sir Robert Jernegan. Unfortunately very little is known about the commander of the largest unit of English cavalry to fight in Italy since the times of the great English *condottiere* John Hawkwood in the fourteenth century. Sir Robert was knighted in France by the duke of Suffolk on 1 November 1523 and appointed keeper of the new fortress of Newnhambridge on 12 April 1526. In September 1527 Sir Robert, who according to Du Bellay was "gentilhomme de la chambre du Roy (Francis I) et du Roy d'Angleterre" [gentleman of the chamber of the King and of the King of England] and "homme bien estimé" [highly esteemed man] [337], was sent by Cardinal Wolsey to Lautrec's camp at the head of two hundred light horsemen to act as military counterpart to the Bolognese Gregorio Casale, knight of St. John and ambassador of the *Serenissimo di Anglia* in Italy. The presence of Sir Robert's company was probably more a sign of the importance that Henry VIII attached to the liberation of the pope (to win Clement VII's assent to his divorce from the emperor's sister) than an attempt to make up for the shortage of light cavalry in the French army. Nonetheless, with regard to light cavalry, England and its continental possessions, after Italy, were France's closest source of tactical expertise and troops of that type. Apart from the obvious technical differences between the English equipment and that in common use in Italy, which probably was more up-to-date, the demilancers (so called because considered 'incomplete'j115

versions of the traditional knights in full armour) who by the 1520s made up the bulk of the Tudor cavalry forces were not substantially different from the "mongrel' Italian light horsemen *alla borgognona*. When Casale went to Orvieto to discuss with the pope the difficult issue of Henry VIII's divorce, Sir Robert, being a soldier rather than a diplomat, remained with the League's army, and his company was thus among the first to arrive in sight of Naples [338].

The retreating Imperial army seems to have been rather demoralized and evaded all direct confrontation. The confused situation of the Imperialists was confirmed by prisoners captured by Sir Robert: they still did not know whether to take refuge inside Naples or fight a pitched battle [339]. Moreover, their cowardice left the League's officers astonished: it seemed that eventually "iudicio divino" [divine judgement] had overtaken the dreaded

[336] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Grotta Menarda, 4 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 273r.

[337] Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, cit., vol. XVIII, p. 65.

[338] For the correspondence of Sir Robert and of his lieutenant John Carew: *Calendar of State Papers, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, vols. III part II, and IV parts I and II.

[339] Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 6 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 205r.

Imperialists [340]. There were also signs, apparently, of crumbling within the enemy army. Deliberately left unpaid and without victuals, many Italian footsoldiers were leaving the Imperial camp. A captain even told the Mantuan ambassador that his company had left the Imperial camp at midday undisturbed, marching with flying colours [341]. However, the decision to expel most of the Italians from the army was a deliberate one. The Imperial commanders were in fact screening their troops, getting rid of the least reliable units in view of the imminent start to the siege of Naples.

On 11 April, when the League's army was still seven miles from the capital of the *Regno*, the Imperialists showed that they had stopped running. As the companies of Jernegan, Orsini and Selva were returning from a successful and fruitful skirmish at Poggioreale, in sight of the walls of Naples, Selva's scouts sighted what seemed to be scattered remnants of Imperial light cavalry, ripe for capture. Against the will of the other two captains – who had wind of an ambush – Selva decided to take the risk. He led both his own company and those of Sir Robert and Valerio Orsini, who had decided to follow him ("ma con sospetto" [but with caution]), into what turned out to be an ambush carefully set by Ferrante Gonzaga, who fell upon them at the head of hundreds of Spanish, Italian and Albanian light horsemen. However, the surprise was not complete, and the League's troops were eventually able to fight their way through the ranks of the Imperial cavalry. But it was not easy, for Orsini was wounded twice in the face, more than thirty of Selva's horsemen were captured and the booty was lost [342].

The conclusion of the campaign, therefore, was not close at hand and despite what many commanders and ambassadors of the League's army seemed to think, the 'devil's army' was far from defeated.

[340] Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 29 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 193r.

[341] It seems also that the Spaniards had broken the agreement made with the Italians, according to which neither *natione* would agree to be paid unless both were; Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 8 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 207r.

[342] Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 12 Aprril 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 211r.

IV. "See Naples, then Die": the Siege

1. Bastions and Galleys: Naples Blockaded

"Ma quando il sol gli aridi campi fiede
Con raggi assai ferventi, e in alto sorge,
Ecco apparir Gierusalem si vede,
Ecco additar Gierusalem si scorge;
Ecco da mille voci unitamente
Gierusalemme salutar si sente". [343]

Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto III, 3

Finally, the demoralized columns of the Imperialists converged on Naples and camped outside the city. Initially, the Imperial generals and the Imperial lieutenant of Naples, Don Hugo de Moncada, weighed the possibility of defending the capital without actually entering it, by establishing a fortified position close to the city walls. Eventually, the opinion of Moncada, who wanted to secure the capital of the *Regno* against the restless Neapolitan *baroni* and *popolo* as well as against the French army, prevailed over that of Alfonso d'Avalos and the pleas of Naples's Council to spare the city the grim fate of Milan. And so it was that by mid-March, "piangendo indarno i Napoletani" [the Neapolitans crying in vain] [344], the Imperial army was distributed among the various town districts, along with its retinue of camp followers (which, according to a Florentine merchant, included at least six thousand women) [345].

In the meantime, the huge army of the League was advancing slowly towards Naples: by the end of March, Marco del Nero estimated that in total it was made up of eighty thousand people and twenty thousand horses, more than two thirds of which were useless mouths to feed, "/ / et non si potrìa credere la gran quantità di vectovaglie si consuma\ \" [/ / and one could not believe the great quantity of victuals consumed\ \] [346]. Neither the provisions nor the organizational skills of the *maestri di campo* were ever sufficient for the needs of such an army, so that before proceeding towards Naples Lautrec needed to secure the logistical support of all the cities south of the river Garigliano. To make matters worse,

[343] "But when the sunlight strikes the arid fields / with scorching rays and rises in the sky, / behold, they see Jerusalem appear, / behold, to Jerusalem they point; / behold, a thousand voices united / are heard to acclaim Jerusalem."

[344] Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 55r; cf. G. Rosso, *Historia delle cose di Napoli sotto l'imperio di Carlo quinto, cominciando dall'anno 1526 per infino all'anno 1537*, Naples, Appresso Gio. Domenico Montanaro, 1635, p. 15.

[345] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 260.

[346] Marco del Nero to the Ten, San Antonio, 31 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 145r.

the effects of the untimely, radical cuts to the allocations destined for Lautrec's army decided by Francis I were beginning to make themselves felt. Already on 11 April, while inspecting the camp, the captain general was greeted wherever he went by the ominous, multi-lingual chorus of his soldiers shouting "li tedeschi... 'ghelde, ghelde', li franzesi 'argent', et li italiani 'denari, denari'" [the Germans... 'ghelde, ghelde', the Frenchmen 'argent', and the Italians 'denari, denari'] [347]. By then some units were owed one instalment of pay, others two. Lautrec managed to appease the soldiers by assuring them that their pay was on the way, but to find the money needed he had to ask the captains of the various units under his command for substantial loans – and this was before even sighting the walls of Naples. Though he justified his requests in a more articulate way, even Marco del Nero was asking his masters for more money at this time. His purse was empty, and being where he was, "bisogna esser copioso et di servitori, di cavalli et chariaggi... volendo stare secondo che richiede il grado di chi rappresenta le Signorie Vostre" [it is necessary to be abundant in servants, horses and carts... if one wishes to maintain the level required for those who represent Your Lordships] [348].

Notwithstanding the tactical victory achieved at Troia, the opinion the Florentine representatives had formed of the League's army did not improve as it approached Naples, and the tone of their letters was different from that of their more optimistic Mantuan and Ferrarese colleagues. Both del Nero and Soderini were increasingly worried by the lack of a large contingent of good light cavalry; the League had too few and they were worth little. Since the superior numbers and quality of their light cavalry allowed the Imperialists to scour the territory, ambassador del Nero was afraid that the protection of the League's vulnerable supply lines would be left to its infantry troops (as indeed happened in the following months), which could lead to scattering and a progressive loss of effectiveness [349]. Moreover, in the opinion of both del Nero and Soderini, most of the League's generals were overconfident and lacked a comprehensive view of the war; "per dire quel mi pare, non ci veggo homo nessuno pensi a questa guerra se non Monsignor Illustrissimo, el quale, benché sia invictissimo, mi pare che solo harà molte fatiche" [in my opinion, I do not notice any man who thinks of this war if not *Monsignor Illustrissimo*, who, though absolutely undefeated, will (I think) have great difficulty on his own] [350]. The fact that these remarks were made before the beginning of the siege of Naples by two civilian functionaries supposedly lacking in military expertise, and that the problems they indicated were to play a major role in the eventual disastrous collapse of the League's forces in the Kingdom of Naples, is a tribute to the quality of the Florentine diplomatic tradition.

In the meantime the pressure on Naples of the League's forces was growing constantly. While its light cavalry harassed the Imperialists from the east, on 13 April the galley squadron of Filippino Doria cannonaded the camp of the Imperial Landsknechts near the church of La Maddalena, forcing the Germans to dislodge hastily. Under the cover of a

[347] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 13 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 292r.

[348] *Ibid.* f. 290r.

[349] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 18 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 260r.

[350] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 20 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, ff. 232v-233r.

landing party of seven hundred arquebusiers, the Genoese took on fresh water (presumably from the river Sebeto) and headed towards Amalfi. Thanks to his raids on coastal cities and on Spanish ships trying to leave Naples, Filippino Doria amassed a considerable booty and captured five hundred Spaniards whom he immediately chained to the oars [351] (thereby exacerbating an old grudge between the two *nationi*, which dated back to the sack of Genoa by the troops of the marquis of Pescara in 1521).

On 21 April, while the main camp was still three miles from the city on the road to Aversa, the infantry of the League attacked Naples for the first time. Orazio and the Black Bands caught a Spanish contingent of two hundred foot soldiers and five hundred light horsemen by surprise, forcing it to retreat towards the Porta Capuana. A first relief sortie by the Italian companies and a second by the Landsknechts were similarly repelled, and the Imperialists were pursued into the suburbs of Naples, where Pierre de Veyre [352], a gentleman of Charles V's chamber, was killed by an arquebus shot. More than fifty Imperial foot soldiers and twenty-five light horsemen were either killed or captured, while the Bands lost ten men, killed or badly wounded. The generals of the League were impressed by this first victory of the Black Bands, "tal che ogni giorno cresce la reputatione loro" [so that their reputation grows daily] [353], while, as Sir Robert Jernegan wrote to Henry VIII, the Imperialists looked "worse discomfited than when they fled at the town of Troye" [354].

As the League's army advanced towards Naples, the skirmishes intensified and reached their peak on 25 April, when almost two thousand Imperial arquebusiers went to attack a group of shooters who were defending a house near Poggioreale where Lautrec was planning to build his main camp (Figure 15). To support them, Lautrec, who was now encamped only half a mile away from Poggioreale, sent first the White Bands (Italian infantry in French service) under the command of Gerolamo da Castiglione with fifteen hundred arquebusiers, and then Orazio Baglioni, with two thousand arquebusiers of the Black Bands. On their arrival, the Italians of Castiglione were involved in "una scaramuzza grossissima, tutta d'archebusieri" [a huge skirmish, of only arquebusiers]. The losses were heavy on both sides, but the Imperialists (possibly Spaniards) were still holding their positions when the Florentine troops joined the fray. Under their furious assault the Imperial front collapsed, and one thousand arquebusiers and three hundred horsemen were sent from Naples to support the first contingent, which was now facing annihilation. The skirmish continued until sunset, when after a final charge the troops of the League managed to drive the enemy back and pursue it up to the Porta Capuana. However, this spurt brought the soldiers of the Black Bands within range of the Imperial artillery and exposed them, when they were before the Porta Capuana, to the fire of the muskets *da posta* posi-

[351] Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 15 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Rome, 876, f. 219r.

[352] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, pp. 338-339. Pierre de Veyre, better known as *monsieur* de Migliau, had been sent to Italy by Charles V after the sack of Rome with the conditions for liberating the pope. Since he ended up by trying to stop the negotiations, because they were taking a turn that was too favourable to Clement VII, both Guicciardini and Giovio considered his death a just reward for his *empietà*.

[353] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Casoria, 21 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 265r.

[354] Sir Robert Jernegan to Henry VIII, 26 April 1528, *Calendar of State Papers, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, vol. IV, part II, 4207, p. 1857.

tioned on the city walls. One of the many victims of the crossfire was Captain Lucantonio Cuppano, who had his right thigh-bone shattered by a musket shot shortly after killing an Imperial light horseman [355]. Eventually, the Florentine forces had to withdraw with heavy losses but Lucantonio, one of their best commanders, was out of combat for the rest of the

[355] Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 25 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Rome, 876, f. 238r-239v; see also Lucantonio Cuppano to the Ten, 28 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 129, f. 235r.

Figure 15
Antoine Lafréry, *Map of Naples*, 1566 (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence)

Legenda

1. Baluardo del Carmine
2. Porta del Mercato
3. Porta Nolana
4. Porta Capuana
5. Porta San Gennaro
6. Porta Santa Maria
7. Hill of San Martino
8. Castel Nuovo
9. Castel dell'Uovo
10. Road to the hill of Poggioreale (main camp of the League)
11. Ponte della Maddalena on River Sebeto.

The broken line shows the different perimeter of the walls of Naples in 1528. This map shows Naples as it was after the completion of the works started in 1535 by viceroy Pedro de Toledo. In the decades that followed the siege of 1528, Naples expanded mostly westwards, so that the section of the city walls that faced the League's fortifications on Poggioreale was not radically different from the one depicted here. Most of the new fortifications were built to protect those areas which had been found difficult or crucial to defend during the siege of 1528.
After 1535, large tracts of the city walls (in particular those after Porta San Gennaro) were rebuilt according to the geometric forms of the *trace italienne*, with angular bastions in place of the old round towers. Of particular interest is the line of modern bastions which begins from the Porta Santa Maria (from where the old Aragonese city walls began to turn towards the Castel Nuovo) and extends towards San Martino to close the gap between city and the hill, where the formidable six-pointed star-shaped fortress of Sant'Elmo replaced the earthen bastions hurriedly erected on the top of the hill by the defenders before the arrival of Lautrec's army.

siege, at a time when the Bands' Sergeant-Major Giovambattista Gotti was still refusing to set aside his rage against Orazio. Three splinters of bone were extracted from Lucantonio's wound. By the beginning of July the captain was doing well, but "per li soi disordini" [for his negligence] he relapsed, to the point that his brother Nobile did not expect him to survive, though he eventually recovered [356].

[356] Nobile Cuppano to the marquis of Mantua, 3 July 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli

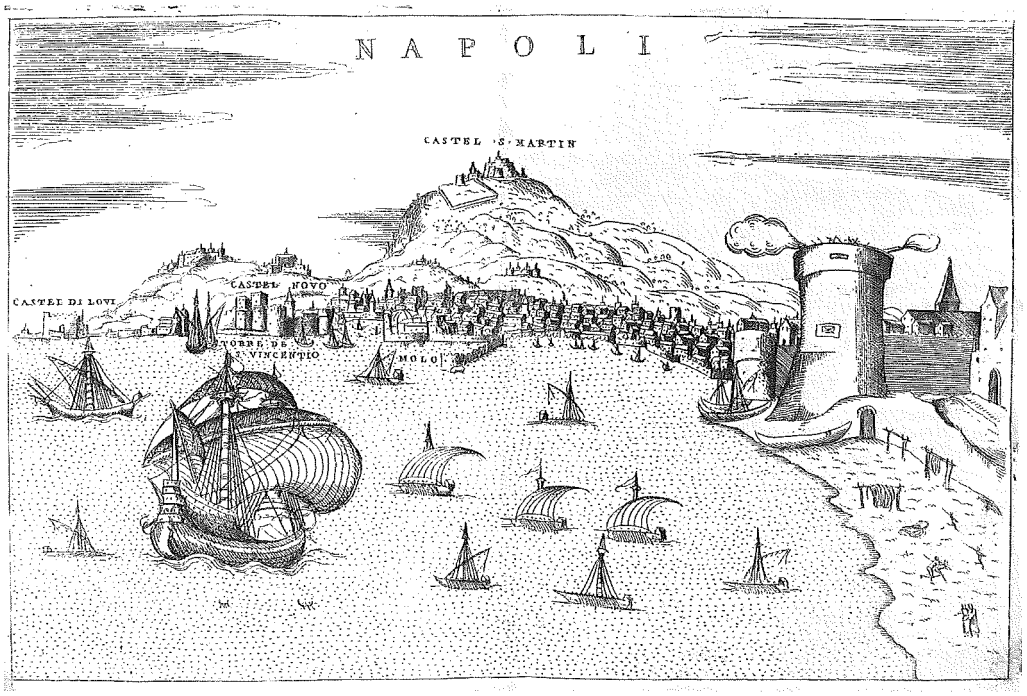


Figure 16
View of Naples, from G. Ballino, *De' disegni delle più illustri città et fortezze del mondo, parte I*, Venice, 1569 (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence).
Although of inferior quality and much less accurate than the Lafréry map, this view of Naples from the east gives us to have a three-dimensional view of the defensive system of the city. In the foreground, unnamed, one sees a part of the powerful Baluardo [Bulwark] del Carmine.

On 26 April Lautrec transferred his headquarters to the *villa* of the duke of Montalto on the hill of Poggioreale, which had been heavily fortified during the preceding days with trenches and bastions. Looking at the beautiful city from their new position, Lautrec and his staff officers carefully pondered the situation. Naples was not Pavia. Naples was one of the largest European cities – its inhabitants numbered more than a hundred thousand – and, at the same time, one of the finest Mediterranean harbours. To complicate matters further, no river ran through the city.

In 1528 the defensive system of Habsburg Naples was still the same as it had been in the Aragonese period. It was based on a wall which was in bad condition and old-fashioned (i.e. perpendicular) and had round towers at intervals (still clearly visible in the eastern section of the walls in the Lafréry map), and on a series of fortresses. Castel dell'Uovo, first built during Norman times, had been renovated by 1458, as had the impressive Castel Nuovo, which had been rebuilt and surrounded by low, thick walls and a system of ram-

e Sicilia, 810, f. 150r. Nobile Cuppano, then in Mantuan service (like his brothers Annibale, Scipione, Tommaso and Quintino), had been sent to the League's camp to buy a large number of fine Neapolitan steeds.

parts and barbicans that was intended to shield the fortress from direct artillery fire. The powerful Baluardo [Bulwark] del Carmine (Figure 16) at the eastern end of the wall was the most recent addition, having been built after 1463 to replace the Castel Capuano, which had been turned into an urban *palazzo* after the extension of the city's defensive perimeter. After conquering the city in 1503, Consalvo de Cordova had the Castel Nuovo surrounded by a new line of bastions, but since that time the city walls of Naples had been neglected and large sections needed repairs [357].

In the weeks before the arrival of the army of the League, the Imperialists had hurriedly built earth ramparts and bastions to strengthen sections of the Aragonese walls and they continued to do so throughout the siege. Most of their efforts, however, had been accomplished outside the walls of Naples. The fortress of Castel Belforte on the hill of S. Martino dated to the period of the Angevin kings, but by the time the League's army was in sight of Naples, the top of the steep hill had been "fortificato maravigliosamente" [marvellously fortified] [358], encircled by a circuit of massive earthworks, reinforced by several pieces of heavy artillery and a garrison of one thousand arquebusiers. This new fort did not represent a direct threat to the besiegers, but being positioned at the eastern end of the Posillipo ridge (which divides the Cuman peninsula in two) on a rock basement that prevented mining, it did prevent the French from taking possession of a position that dominated the city and from passing between the steep slopes of the hill of San Martino and the western walls of Naples, thereby encircling it completely. The formidable fortress of Castel Nuovo, which had played a major role in preceding sieges, remained practically undisturbed in 1528.

The hill of Poggioreale from where Lautrec admired the city was also a remarkable sight, but in a completely different way. Between 1451 and 1458, the marshes of La Maddalena were drained, the river Sebeto canalized and the new fields sown with wheat. The Aragonese kings and their nobility built their *ville* on its rolling hills. The magnificent *villa* of Ferrante of Aragon, with all the smaller versions built around it, was surrounded by a lush park dotted with stables, fish ponds, fountains with plays of water and greenhouses. However, such a place of wonders survived only thanks to a carefully and studiously maintained balance between land and water that was compromised by the arrival of Lautrec's gargantuan army. As Cesare Accorsi wrote from Naples on 18 April, "serà Napoli et tutte le sua masseritie di fuora ruinato et disfatto, et maxime quelli belli giardini con quelli belli palazzi che al mondo non z'è più ameno loco... mi dole vedere quelli belli lochi esser ruinati da questi barbari" [Naples and all her *masserie* will be ruined and pillaged, and above all those beautiful gardens and beautiful *palazzi*, of which there is no more pleasant a place in the world... it hurts me to see these beautiful places ruined by these barbarians] [359]. To make things worse, Laurec took a decision that he would eventually regret, because of both

[357] On the development and architectural history of the city of Naples, see G. Russo, *La città di Napoli dalle origini al 1860*, Naples, Società pel Risanamento di Napoli, 1960, vol. I, pp. 230-241; *Cartografia della città di Napoli*, edited by C. de' Seta, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche Italiane, 1969, vol. I, pp. 81-123. On Castel Nuovo, see also S. Pepper-N. Adams, *Firearms and Fortifications: Military Architecture and siege Warfare in Sixteenth-Century Siena*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, pp. 20-21.

[358] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Casoria, 21 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 265r.

[359] Cesare Accorsi to Bonifacio Miliono, 18 April 1528, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 279.

its ineffectiveness and the damage it caused to his host: he ordered the destruction of the aqueduct that supplied Naples's fountains and watermills, thereby breaking Poggioreale's delicate hydro-geological balance. The resulting waters flooded most of the fields between the camp and the city, creating the ideal marshy environment for the development of many of the illnesses that would decimate the League's troops in the following weeks and months. As the French captain general was to learn to his own (and his army's) cost, beneath every fragile Italian paradise may lie a hidden hell.

Yet, in partial compensation for such devastation, it has to be said that the League's camp on Poggioreale, and the impressive defence system which was progressively built around it as the siege went on, would eventually be regarded as Navarro's masterpiece even by the Imperialists. Charles V himself decided to take a long tour of its imposing remains during his visit to Naples in 1535 [360].

On the naval front of the siege, we must remember that in Mediterranean warfare the sea was dominated by the major harbours like Naples rather than by fleets (See Appendix 2). To begin with, the few galleys of the League could not hope to outgun the batteries of the harbour of Naples, and any frontal attack or, worse still, any attempted landing, would have ended up – at best – in a bloody and costly disaster, even if it were made by the combined might of the naval forces. Sixteen Venetian galleys were expected to arrive in a few weeks, but in the meanwhile the eight galleys of the Doria squadron were insufficient even to blockade the port. To intercept the small, fast sailing and oared ships that carried provisions and reinforcements to Naples by day and (especially) by night, a galley captain had at his disposal a rather reduced window of attack besides many other factors to consider: for example, the harbour's artillery or the constant threat of being caught, with his oarsmen blown and unable to manoeuvre, by a sortie of the Imperial galleys at anchor in the harbour. The galley was an oared fighting vessel with a mostly offensive potential; due to the requirements of its manpower and its relatively high structural fragility, its range of action was limited and it required frequent access to a harbour with adequate facilities. The best option would have been a line of blockade close to the city, but from the beginning of the siege the galleys of Filippino Doria (?-1531) had been forced to use Salerno as their main base – a fact that reduced their range by the two days required (in good weather) to go from there to Naples and back. Moreover, the Imperialists kept control of both the island of Ischia and the city of Gaeta, north of the river Garigliano. Gaeta was far away and it was also well fortified, so the League's generals would have to send a significant part of their host there for weeks, or even months, if they wanted to take it (as they eventually, and unsuccessfully, tried to do). In the meantime its harbour, which was not blockaded, was able to receive and sort the supplies and reinforcements from Spain and especially from Sicily. Through Ischia, the Imperialists kept a lifeline open at the mouth of the Gulf of Naples; the island's harbour facilities were inadequate, but the batteries of the formidable seaside fortress offered all the ships running Naples's blockade a safe transit point close to their destination.

[360] Paolo Giovio to Rodolfo Pio de Carpi, Naples, 12 December 1537, in P. Giovio, *Lettere*, edited by G.G. Ferrero, Rome, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1956, vol. I, p. 169.

Table 3. Florentine Troops at the Siege of Naples (April 1528).

The Black Bands:	
Lucantonio Cuppano	400
Pasquino Còrso	320
Giovanni Turrini	310
Giuliano Strozzi	300
Girolamo de' Ciai	250
Amico da Venafro	250
Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto	250
Scipione da Imola	250
Tommasino Còrso	220
Bino Signorelli	200
Belriguardo da Castiglione	200
Bernardo Strozzi	200
Francesco Rustichello	200
Total	3,350
Others:	
Perugian Infantry (three companies)	1,000
Perugian Light Cavalrymen	150

Aware of the fact that he had insufficient troops to attack both San Martino and Naples, during this first phase of the siege Lautrec decided to focus on the former. For this reason he planned to move his main *alloggiamento* from Poggioreale, which was in front of the Porta Capuana, towards San Martino, opposite Porta San Gennaro and closer to the city [361]. While the new quarters were being rendered secure by the work of thousands of sappers, Count Anton Maria Avogadro, colonel of the Venetian Landsknechts, was sent to preside over the advanced positions. Quartered with his men on a hilltop (a "loco molto scoperto" [very exposed place]) an arquebus shot away from San Martino as the crow flies, the Brescian *condottiere* considered San Martino a "loco fortissimo" [extremely secure place] and felt little enthusiasm for the idea of an assault; "mi par cosa dura, et forsi si potrà dir 'Si Africa pianse, Italia non ne rise'" [it seems to me a difficult undertaking, and perhaps it could be said 'if Africa wept, Italy did not rejoice in it']. According to Avogadro's information, at that point of the siege the French could count on 4-5,000 Landsknechts, 3,000 Swiss, more than 4,000 French and Gascons and over 2,000 Italians of the White Bands. The Venetians had 800-1,000 Corsicans and 1,200 Landsknechts, while the Florentine Black Bands (Florence's allies never made a distinction between the Bands and Orazio Baglioni's Perugian troops) were "meglio di 4,000 in 5,000 homeni d'arme, e veramente fanno honore a Italiani" [between 4,000 and 5,000 soldiers, and they truly bring honour to the Italians] (see Table 3). On the other side of the barricade, the Imperialists could count on approximately 5,000 Spaniards, as many Landsknechts and 2,000 Italians [362]. Surprisingly patriotic for somebody in command of a German unit, Count Avogadro was

[361] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 8 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 404r; see also Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1925-1926.

[362] Count Antonio Maria Avogadro to Antonio Capriolo, 28 April 1528, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 383.

sure that the seizure of San Martino would break up the defences of Naples, allowing the forces of the League to cut the Imperialists to pieces and eventually "liberar questa povera Italia da questi marani" [to liberate this poor Italy from these *marranos*] [363]. Ever a pessimist, del Nero believed that the twenty thousand footsoldiers of the League were barely enough to blockade the city, and that some ten thousand more good infantrymen were needed to offer a more offensive stance [364].

At the same time, the situation in Naples was not very rosy [365]. The Imperialists had imposed on the Neapolitans, who had been unaccustomed to war since the first phase of the Italian Wars in 1504, the same harsh discipline they had enforced in Milan during its sieges: the *popolo* was disarmed, a ban was put on meetings and a curfew was enforced. The Imperial generals began to take a census of able-bodied Neapolitans, but soon rejected the idea of arming a citizen militia as dangerous [366]. The warehouses of Castel Nuovo were full of wheat and there was enough wine, at least at the beginning of the siege, to soften the tempers of the Landsknechts who, unlike the Spaniards, continually grumbled about their arrears of wages. The city wells made up for the lack of aqueducts, but not for the shortage of watermills and, therefore, bread; the soldiers either used rudimentary handmills to produce very low-quality flour or ate boiled grain. However, the indiscipline of the Imperial troops and particularly of the Landsknechts – who thought nothing of looting their commanders' cellars and residences in their riotous search for hidden wine (particularly bloody was their raid on the quarters of Fernando de Alarcón, who barely escaped with his life) – soon jeopardized the logistical situation of the whole army and exasperated the already disheartened Neapolitans [367]. On 2 May the so-called miracle of St. Gennaro had failed to take place and the blood of the city's patron saint had refused to liquefy – as happened, according to popular tradition, when the city was about to be hit by some grave calamity.

The majority of the more affluent Neapolitans – up to eight thousand, according to Santoro – did not wait for such an evident sign of divine disfavour and left the city with their families before the arrival of Lautrec's army, seeking refuge in Sorrento, Gaeta, Ischia or Procida, according to their political allegiances. The day of reckoning between the Aragonese and Angevin factions was approaching and the whole Kingdom of Naples was, figuratively speaking, holding its breath. The aim of the Imperialist commanders was to resist until the arrival of the relief army that was being mustered north of the Alps by the duke of Brunswick. In Naples, however, the *Consejo* [Council] was paralyzed by the conflict between the supporters of the Imperial Lieutenant Don Hugo de Moncada (Alfonso d'Avalos, Cesare Fieramosca and Ascanio Colonna) and those of the prince of Orange (Ferrante Gonzaga, Juan de Urbina, Antonio de Ijar and Fernando de Alarcón). According

[363] Count Antonio Maria Avogadro to Antonio Capriolo, 4 May 1528, in *ibid.*, p. 466.

[364] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Capodichino, 26 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 270r.

[365] Neapolitan edited sources on the siege of 1528: Rosso, *Historie*, cit. and Leonardo Santoro, *Dei successi del sacco di Roma e Guerra del Regno di Napoli*, cit. Although both contain many mistakes, they give a quite vivid picture of the war from the point of view of the besiegers (Santoro was the representative sent by Caserta to give Lautrec the keys of the city) and of the besieged (Rosso).

[366] Rosso, *Historia*, cit., p. 19.

[367] Santoro, *Dei Successi*, cit., p. 65.

to the Ferrarese representative in Naples Gerolamo Naselli, in those days the most frequently heard phrase was: "Io me ne lavo le mani" [I wash my hands of this] – hardly a good premise for any kind of constructive initiative. Moncada, who had governed the Kingdom of Naples since the death of Viceroy Charles de Lannoy in 1527, resented being demoted to a *de facto* secondary role after the prince of Orange's arrival in Naples. And the situation was made worse by the fact that Charles V had verbally bestowed on the captain general of the Imperial army either the duchy of Milan or the viceroyalty of Naples. Moncada was frantically looking for a way to reinforce his candidature as Lannoy's successor [368]. The easiest way to do this was to have a sound military victory, which explains why Moncada, who had been captain general of the Spanish fleet for years and viceroy of Sicily, insisted on taking a strong initiative in the only area of conflict where his experience, reputation and authority were unquestionably superior to those of his young Burgundian rival: the sea. After overcoming the resistance of the other members of the *consejo* with the help of the marquis of Vasto, whom he had pardoned and recalled from his estates in Ischia (where Alfonso d'Avalos had spent some time in disgrace after wounding the count of Potenza in a duel and killing the count's son), Don Hugo de Moncada and his partisans embarked (literally) on a hazardous expedition aimed at destroying Doria's fleet before it could join up with the Venetian galleys.

Fought mainly for political reasons, the battle of Capo d'Orso (28 April 1528 – see Appendix 6) had chiefly political consequences. The overwhelming victory of the League persuaded many of the Kingdom's baronial families which had until then maintained a wary neutrality, that the days of Imperial/Aragonese rule were at an end and that they should join the French/Angevin party. At the same time, however, the virtual annihilation of the Neapolitan squadron had physically removed all the prince of Orange's opponents from the *consejo*. This enabled Charles V's forces in the *Regno* to have once again a single strong leader and also, as we shall see, planted the seed of discord in the League's camp. The authority of Philibert de Châlons was definitively established when he became viceroy of the Kingdom of Naples: an appointment made by Charles V after the defeat of Capo d'Orso and the death of Don Hugo de Moncada. In fact the defences of Naples did not waver, and the Imperialists strengthened their position by expelling thousands of "bocche disutili" [useless mouths] from the city. Ferrante Gonzaga wrote to his brother that he was still confident in the justness of the Imperial cause and its "buona fortuna" [good luck] – a powerful combination that had so often given victory to the followers of His Caesarean Majesty when defeat seemed imminent – and remarked on the great opportunities that would be offered by the confiscation of the lands of such a large number of rebellious barons. However, in a notable act of *mammismo*, only a few days earlier Ferrante had also written to his mother Isabella d'Este, the widowed marchioness of Mantua and one of the great *signore* of the Italian Renaissance, asking urgently for money, "ch'io mi moro di fame se la Reverentia Vostra non mi sovviene per qualche via" [for I will die of hunger, if your Reverence does not come to my aid in some way] [369].

[368] Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, 23 May 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, Carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9, foliation is absent. On the factions of the Imperial *consejo*, see also Rosso, *Historia*, cit., p. 27 and CO.DO.IN., cit., XXXVIII, pp. 500-501.

[369] Ferrante Gonzaga to the marquis of Mantua, Naples, 7 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera,

In the meantime, the excavation of the trenches between San Martino and Naples advanced slowly, "combatendo il tereno a spana a spana" [fighting every inch of the way], and the Imperialists launched frequent counterattacks from the city [370]. On 2 May Rossino de' Ciai's company and Count Avogadro's Landsknechts repelled an enemy attack, pursuing the Imperialists to the very walls of Naples. However, in so doing the Florentines [371] came under intense fire from the city's small firearms and started to withdraw; caught in the open without support, they were overwhelmed and scattered by a well-timed sortie of the Imperial light cavalry. Wounded in the thigh by an arquebus shot, Captain Rossino found himself isolated and surrounded by enemy horsemen. He fought to the death, receiving three lance strokes in the face and one in the chest [372]. Some fifty of the Black Bands fell with him.

The sight of the League's infantry, and especially the Black Bands, drawn too far from their trenches and then caught in the open and slaughtered by the Imperial light horsemen without receiving any support from the mounted troops of the League was becoming all too common [373]. Giovanni de' Medici knew how to support the light infantry with his light cavalry, but he had been trained by the Imperialists, whereas in the French camp, where the value of tactical bodies of light cavalry was yet to be recognised, it was hard to find anybody with the appropriate skill. In fact, the League's small contingent of light cavalry had been badly neglected to the advantage of the men-at-arms. By the end of April Sir Robert Jernegan and his lieutenant John Carew had died of typhus [374] and their company had probably disbanded. *Provveditore* Andrea Civran and most of his stradiots had been sent to Apulia, while Valerio Orsini, unpaid, had left Venetian service [375]. The remaining horsemen were too few – like those of Orazio Baglioni, for according to the malicious *commissario* Soderini, there had never been more than fifty – and also ineffectual [376]. Nor was this Orazio's only failing. The Black Bands were "valente et licentiose" [valiant and undisciplined] and most of the captains were skilled professionals but the captain general, wrote Giovambattista Soderini, was not a "grandissimo homo di guerra" [a great military man] and – a capital sin in the eyes of a Florentine republican – "si scorda la militia per il principato. Né anchora mostra sapere che autorità habi un commissario fiorentino ne' vostri eserciti" [he disregards the *militia* for the *principato*. And he still does not appear to know

Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 181r.; Ferrante Gonzaga to Isabella d'Este, 23 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 180r.

[370] Antonio Maria Avogadro to Antonio Capriolo, 4 May 1528. Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, p. 466.

[371] According to Sederini, Rossino's company was "tutta di Fiorentini" [made up only of Florentines]. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 6 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 224v.

[372] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 3 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 373r/v.

[373] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 333r.

[374] John Carowe (Carew) to Henry VIII, 28 April 1528, in *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, vol. IV, part II, 4215, p. 1858. John Carowe died of typhus a few days after writing this letter.

[375] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 339r. Soderini considered Orsini's discharge a considerable loss for the League.

[376] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 16 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 337r.

the authority that a Florentine commissioner has in your armies] [377]. The *commissario* simply couldn't accept the way Orazio and his Perugian followers lorded it "alla Perugina" in the Bands' *piazza* in the League's camp. The *maestro di campo* and the *aguzino* were a disgrace, since they cheated "in grosso" [grossly] and administered justice without questioning the *commissario* first, while Orazio took full advantage of the circumstances (and the distance from Florence) to "fare bottega" [look after his own interests] and break the terms of his *condotta* one after another. The *commissario* had been deprived of his authority and was as uninformed as a simple footsoldier [378]. The main issue, as always, was the right to appoint and dismiss the captains of the Black Bands, who already hated and dreaded Orazio. Soderini wanted to give Rossino's company to either Gian Moro or Braccio de' Pazzi [379], "per non uscire dalla natione" [to avoid recruiting outside the *natione*]; Orazio, on the other hand, was determined to increase Bino Signorelli's command by at least twenty-five wages, while the captains of the Bands wished to please their sergeant-major by giving the company to his brother. Giovanni Turrini, one of the Bands' best captains, chose this moment to ask for permission to entrust his own company to his lieutenant (his brother) and go to Florence to discuss some very important matters with the Ten, possibly on behalf of the *unione* [380]. In the meanwhile, on 11 May, the Imperial light cavalry once again inflicted heavy losses on the Florentine infantry; "et così andiamo consumando il tempo et li homini da bene" [and in this way we waste time and skilled soldiers] [381].

Reassured by the victory at Capo d'Orso, Lautrec decided against leaving Poggioreale and planned to tighten the League's hold on Naples on two fronts: towards San Martino, trying to cut off the fortress from the city, and in the direction of the seashore, in the area of La Maddalena. From the beginning many commanders argued that this would overstretch the League's fortified line, but, as always, Lautrec was inflexible. Del Nero believed that Lautrec was planning to take San Martino with a three-pronged assault: two diversions, one from the sea (with the fleet which was to cannonade the harbour) and one from the land (directly against the city), would mask the real attack and force the Imperialists to split their forces. Then again, the Florentine ambassador was pessimistic, for he argued that the coordination of the Imperial forces had always been superior to that of the League.

In the event, the attack against San Martino never took place and having secured the positions in front of the fortress by installing there Navarro's Gascons and the White Bands with twenty cannons, by mid-May the resources of the League were largely devoted to excavation of the trenches in the direction of La Maddalena, and to the preparation of the network of earthworks, bays and bastions intended to support their great length – at least a mile, from the edge of the camp of the League to the seashore. The artillery positioned at

[377] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 18 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 230v.

[378] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 29 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 240v.

[379] Giovan Moro, included by Giovangirolamo de' Rossi in the list of "valenti homini" apprentices of Giovanni (Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, p. 98) and Braccio de' Pazzi were on the list of the captains *condotti a provvisione* by Florence in July 1527. Giovanni was given a company of two hundred men, Braccio one of one hundred and fifty; ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Delib. Cond. e Stanz., 64, f. 5r.

[380] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 333r.

[381] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 354v.

Capo di Monte frequently opened fire on the fortifications between Porta San Gennaro and Porta Capuana, where the enemy was trying to build a bastion that could threaten the League's fortified line. Some shots were also aimed at the city, apparently without results [382]. Del Nero was unaware that on 15 May a cannon shot hit the quarters of Ferrante Gonzaga and Alarcón, leaving them stunned and covered with rubble [383]. The *fortuna di Cesare* was holding out. What was not holding out was the patience of the Imperial Landsknechts, for on 19 May one of their contingents abandoned its position and was seen marching towards the camp of the League shouting "Ghelt! Ghelt!" [384]. It was only a token strike and immediately called off, but a symptom of the acute financial problems the Imperialists were facing in Naples.

On the sea, the delay of the Venetian squadron, which was still supporting the action of the *Serenissima*'s land forces in the conquest of the Apulian coastal cities of Brindisi and Otranto, was beginning to upset Lautrec. Doria's fleet had destroyed the Neapolitan squadron and operated from nearby Pozzuoli after the town surrendered to the League, but the Genoese galleys were now badly damaged and needed refitting. The blockade, already inefficient, was becoming ineffectual, as many ships entered the harbour of Naples bringing in precious supplies or, as in the case of the convoy of five ships that arrived on 12 May, a reinforcement of eight hundred Spaniards [385].

To make life in Naples even harder, Lautrec decided to capture and destroy the two watermills built on the banks of the Sebeto near La Maddalena. Besides being advanced fortified positions outside the city walls, the watermills were also the only places where the Imperialists could produce the flour needed to relieve the increasingly pressing bread shortage in Naples. The Black Bands spearheaded the attacks and covered the excavation of new trenches. Their job was not an easy one: from the Porta del Mercato the Imperialists could see every move of the enemy infantry and follow the progress of the trenches, while the skirmishes were fought at two arquebus shots from Naples itself [386]. For long days the area became the setting for some of the more violent and intense clashes of the siege as the mills were both taken and lost even four or five times in a single day, in conformity with the savage rituals of trench warfare. Eventually the League's forces prevailed, but not without heavy losses: among the fallen was the captain general of the Florentine infantryhimself.

On 22 May, during an assault from the newly-made trenches and bastions against one of the watermills, Orazio Baglioni found himself separated from the arquebusiers of his escort by an enemy counterattack and surrounded by a company of Spanish infantry. Since Orazio was *disarmato* [unarmoured], wearing only a doublet and holding a halberd [387], the

[382] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 337r.

[383] Gerolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, 23 May 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, Carteggio principi esteri, 9, foliation is absent.

[384] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 421v.

[385] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 405r.

[386] Guazzo, *Historie di messer Marco Guazzo*, cit., pp. 84v-85r.

[387] Francesco Benaduso to the marquis of Mantua, 25 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 118v-119r.

Imperialists probably failed to identify him as a high-ranking enemy officer. In the violent mêlée that followed, Orazio tried to make a stand with the few soldiers he had, but eventually, "volendo pure tenere fermi li sua, fu amazato con arme corte cumbattendo" [insisting on making his men resist, he was killed with close-quarters arms as he fought] [388]. The rescuers found him dying, already stripped, barely recognizable, his body covered with wounds inflicted by swords and halbèrds. To avenge the death of the Florentine captain general, Lautrec ordered a general assault on the contested watermill, which was eventually taken by storm and the millstone, which ground one hundred and fifty *tomoli* of wheat each day (a *tomolo* being equal to about 55.5 litres), was destroyed [389]. While Marco del Nero joined in the general chorus of dismay at the death of Orazio [390] – who had been publicly commended for his valour by Lautrec just a few days before – Soderini pointed out that he had died "solo, come un privato fante" [alone, like an ordinary footsoldier], a suitable end for somebody who did not know how to treat "boni soldati" [good soldiers] [391]. The Mantuan ambassador remarked that Orazio had been left by the enemy in the same state in which he himself had left Azzo da Correggio: naked and wearing only a sock [392]. From Naples Juan Perez, secretary of Charles V, informed his master of the Perugian *condottiere*'s death, adding "que hera grand desservidor de Vuestra Magestad" [that he was a great 'dis-servant' of Your Majesty] [393]. And to celebrate his demise, as well as the arrival of encouraging (false) news spread by the prince of Orange's staff about the alleged arrival in Bologna of the duke of Brunswick's relief army (which in fact never progressed beyond Lodi), during the night the Imperialists rang all the bells of Naples and fired five volleys with all their cannons and arquebuses [394].

The Imperialists responded to the loss of the watermills with a daring *encamisada* [395] in Spanish style. Juan de Urbina, who had taken the place of the marquis of Vasto as captain general of the infantry, organised the operation with great care. During the night between 30 and 31 May, three thousand Spaniards and Landsknechts, equipped with ladders, *trombe*

[388] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 22 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 365r.

[389] Cora di Corrado to the marquis of Mantua, 28 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 121r.

[390] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 441r. For several different versions of the death of Orazio Baglioni, see also Giovio, *La seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 66r/v and Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVII, pp. 534, 542, 546.

[391] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 341v

[392] Francesco Benaduso to the marquis of Mantua, 25 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 119r.

[393] Juan Pérez to Charles V, Naples, 25 May 1528, Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, Colección de Don Luis Salazar y Castro (from now on RAHM, CSC), ms. A-42, ff. 366, 367.

[394] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 444r.

[395] An *encamisada* (*incamiciata*, in Italian) was a surprise attack launched at night, generally a few hours before dusk, in which the members of the raiding party wore a *camisa*, that is a white shirt or surcoat that allowed them to distinguish friend from foe at night and in the confusion that invariably followed a surprise attack. Spanish and Italian troops excelled in this kind of operation. On this specific *encamisada*, see also Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, cit., vol. XVIII, pp. 88-90; Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., pp. 66 v-67r.

di fuoco, *pignatte* [396], *fochi artificiati* [fireworks] and "con loro bravarie de camisate" [with the bravado of their *encamisadas*], silently stole into the still-incomplete perimeter of the League's new earthworks and went up the empty, yet-to-be-finished trenches until they reached a passage to the League's main camp, which was not bounded by a ditch. Had they succeeded in reaching Poggioreale with all those fireworks, the three thousand Imperialists could have inflicted serious damage. However, the passage was dominated by a house guarded by two Basque companies, whose sentries had sighted the enemy quite early on and silently alerted their comrades. To quote the Mantuan ambassador Benaduso, the white shirts turned into red ones as the Basques repelled the desperate assault launched by the Imperialists once they realized they had been discovered [397]. Some fifty Spaniards died during the short and violent attack and many more were wounded, while the losses of the League were minimal.

This was the last great Imperialist counterattack on the La Maddalena side until July, and in fact it concluded the first phase of the siege of Naples. From that night on, both sides were to move more warily and, as we shall see, at a greater distance from the city. However, Lautrec used this success to reassure the duke of Mantua and other Italian leaders on a very important point: fortune, and not valour, had given the emperor so many victories in the past, and now everybody agreed that "la fortuna è mutata" [fortune has changed] and "li cieli... hora li voleno punire" [Heaven... now wants to punish them] [398]. The captain general sensed that the fall of Naples was imminent and refused even to consider the idea of relaxing his army's hold on the city. News from the French ambassador in Florence that the Ten wanted to withdraw a part, if not all, of their troops from the siege in order to protect the city from the Imperial relief army which was about to descend on Italy, excited his anger. "Parendogli che questo fussi uno sinixtro procedere verso di lui, in levargli sì buone genti nel colmo della importantia di quella impresa" [Believing that this was a sinister way to behave towards him, robbing him of such good troops at the most important moment in the undertaking], Lautrec threatened to exclude the Florentine republic from the League of Cognac, adding that "al tempo si ricorderebbe di valersi di tanta ingiuria" [at the right moment he would remember to avail himself of such an insult] [399]. In vain del Nero and Soderini tried to keep their new instructions secret while they convinced the Ten of the outright impracticability of their project as well as its uselessness, since the target of the duke of Brunswick's army was clearly not Florence but Naples. It was to take all the remarkable diplomatic skill of ambassador del Nero to appease the captain general's fury.

On the other hand, Lautrec's line of action was not approved by everybody. His decision to proceed to a blockade by staying very close to Naples's walls had been motivated by the

[396] The *trombe da fuoco* were a sort of short-range flamethrower that could be utilised only once, made up of a hollowed log filled with a mixture of highly inflammable materials, reinforced with leather and iron rings and placed at the end of a long pole – sometimes a pike. A *pignatta* [pot] was basically a low-potential grenade.

[397] Francesco Benaduso to the marquis of Mantua, 31 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 123r.

[398] Odet de Foix to the marquis of Mantua, 1 June 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 125r/v.

[399] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 381r; the list of the apologies lavished by Marco del Nero is two-pages long.

assumption that this would heighten the already existing rifts between the various components of the Imperial army, and that the siege would be very short. Yet, albeit demoralized and weakened by their recent defeats, the Imperialists continued to respond to every blow, while the effort of maintaining such high pressure against a city the size of Naples had already begun to wear down the besieging forces. In the period from their entry into the Kingdom of Naples to the death of Orazio Baglioni, the Black Bands, possibly the most combative and frequently deployed unit of the League's army, had suffered more than 400 casualties – "tra feriti et morti alla guerra et di malattie" [amid the wounded and killed by war or disease] – and the qualitative level of the replacements recruited locally was judged unsatisfactory [400].

By the end of May the camp of the League had assumed its final configuration. The main *alloggiamento*, as well as Lautrec's headquarters, was in Poggioreale, which was beyond the range of Naples's artillery and protected by ditches, fences, terrepleined wooden towers [401] and earthen bastions that housed the French heavy ordnance. No frontal assault was ever attempted by the Imperialists against this part of the camp. It was a veritable city made of earth, wood and tents, dotted with pre-existing buildings and farm-houses, with tens of thousands of inhabitants and several *piazze d'arme* – one for each component of the army and, probably, at least one for merchants and victuallers. As the Imperialists had to admit grudgingly, the soldiers of the League "no menos fuertes estaban que los de la ciudad" [were no less well protected than those in the city] [402]. The *alloggiamento* was the backbone of the besieging camp, but with regard to the city its primary purpose was that of containment. A more offensive role was played by the *forti* that protruded from the eastern and western sides of the main quarters, that is towards San Martino and La Maddalena, which Du Bellay called respectively *Fort de Gascogne* (or *Fort de France*) and *Fort des Basques* [403]. Positioned closer to the city, the *forti* were defined by earthen bastions and ramparts. Their heavy ordnance – especially that of the *Fort des Basques* – had played an active role in overpowering the watermills at La Maddalena and disrupting the work on the bastion which the Imperialists were building between Porta San Gennaro and Porta Capuana. On the plain below the hills surrounding the city the two networks of trenches that stretched respectively towards San Martino and towards the seashore were the third and last level of the League's impressive complex of earthworks, and closest to Naples's defences. At the same time, Lautrec garrisoned most of his men-at-arms in the neighbouring cities – Capua, Somma, Aversa and Nola – in an attempt to create a sort of safety zone around Naples, but the *gendarmerie* proved to be the wrong instrument to achieve effective control of the territory. The French heavy cavalrymen lacked the right equipment and mounts, the right training and the right mentality, and they disappointed everybody with their lack of discipline and apparent unwillingness to do their duty by actively patrolling the countryside [404].

[400] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 21 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 345r.

[401] Santoro, *Dei successi*, cit., pp. 50-51.

[402] CO.DO.IN., cit., XXXVIII, p. 499

[403] Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, cit., vol. XVIII, pp. 87-88.

[404] After Troia, the French heavy cavalry never lived up to its reputation and demonstrated on many occasions a complete inability to coordinate its efforts with those of other units. By the end of May distrust of them was

The French perhaps controlled the cities, but the more mobile Imperial light cavalry still controlled the roads.

Given the lack of substantial results, by the end of May many high-ranking officers in the League's army believed that it was finally time to prepare a second line of blockade at a greater distance from Naples, to which the army could fall back if necessary. However, everyone was so in awe of Lautrec and so fearful of his disfavour that no one dared to say this openly. The captain general had not summoned a real *consulta* since Troia and he consulted his subordinates one by one, not as a whole. In this way, many issues concerning the situation of the army and its administration that should have been discussed and dealt with jointly were left unresolved, and Lautrec's certainty that Naples would soon fall never came under discussion. The only person in a position to propose something to Lautrec with respect to the conduct of the siege and be listened to was, obviously, Count Pedro Navarro, but the idea of a close-range blockade had been his in the first place [405].

spreading among the soldiers and diplomats who lived in the camp of the League; Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 369r. Cf. also Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 339r.

[405] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 26 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 438r.

2. "Unbearable Heat, Countless Diseases and Incessant Death": the Struggle for Naples

"Cresce l'ardor nocivo, e sempre avampa
più mortalmente in queste parti e in quelle;
a giorno reo notte più rea succede,
e dì peggior di lei dopo lei vede" [406].

Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto XIII, 53

Marco del Nero, who in the conflict between the *commissario* and the Florentine captain general had always kept a low profile, unlike his rancorous colleague refrained from making cutting remarks about the way in which *signore* Orazio died; indeed he considered it a great blow to the whole enterprise. After piously hoping "che Dio habbia hauto l'anima" [that God had his soul], the ambassador pointed out rather philosophically that these were the "fructe di questo mestiero" [fruit of this labour] [407], that is, the mercenary's life. Nor did it escape him that this tragic event also solved some of the problems that had been vexing Florence's expeditionary force since its departure from Umbria. The very day after Orazio's demise, Lautrec summoned the ambassador Marco del Nero and Giovambattista Soderini to his quarters, as well as the captains of the Black Bands and Orazio's Perugian contingent, in order to discuss with them the appointment of his young Italian protégé, the Bolognese *condottiere* Count Ugo de' Pepoli (?-1528) as temporary *governatore* of the Florentine troops, at least until the Ten chose a successor to the late captain general. The importance of the Black Bands was such that no leadership vacuum could be allowed, and in this case it is remarkable that, even after del Nero and Soderini had given their official approval, the approval of the Bands' captains was also considered important, if not essential. The reaction of the captains, who were free at last from Orazio's violent and oppressive leadership, was a positive one. They declared themselves pleased to have a new commander who, albeit still young, was "persona di reputatione grande in questo campo et molto discreto et affabile da farsi pur amare et con dextreza bene ubidire" [a person of great repute in this camp, who is very discreet and affable enough to ingratiate himself and be skilfully obeyed] [408]. Even better, from the first day the *commissario* approved of the choice of Ugo de' Pepoli: the Bolognese count was "honorevole, prudente et moderato" [honourable, prudent and moderate] and was also a favourite of Lautrec, who had enthusiastically backed his candidature [409]. Very little, however, is known about Ugo de' Pepoli. He was a staunchly pro-French partisan and had been admitted to the Order of St. Michel. As a staff officer of Federigo Gonzaga, the Bolognese *condottiere* had always tried to favour and please the Florentine republic – a fact observed and duly noted by the Ten and their envoys. He prob-

[406] "The noxious heat grows and flares up more and more / mortally both here and there; / after a fiendish day falls a more fiendish night, / and then a day even worse than that she sees arise".

[407] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 26 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 441r.

[408] *Ibid.*, f. 441v.

[409] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 341r/v.

ably belonged to the same 'military generation' as Giovanni de' Medici, or perhaps an even younger one, and up to that point his best-known exploit had been a failed attempt (on 11 May 1527) to rescue the pope and the cardinals when they were besieged in Castel Sant'Angelo. In the aftermath of the sack of Rome Count Ugo was sent by the League to Bologna at the head of a thousand Venetian infantrymen. Albeit with difficulty, he helped to keep his native city faithful to the Holy See and under the control of the anti-Imperialist coalition [410]. After a brief stay in France, the Bolognese *condottiere* was attached to the army of Odet de Foix and he returned to Italy as commander of a company of fifty men-at-arms.

At the same time, the Florentine representatives did what they could to prevent the troops who had been under the direct command of Orazio from disbanding completely. The Perugian captains Febo and Leandro – who, according to Soderini, were not "homini da guerra" [warlike men] – refused to remain in Florentine service after the death of their master: a decision the *commissario* welcomed. Bino Signorelli and Ceccone Martelli, on the other hand, were good soldiers, but their demands were considered excessive [411], and they were therefore discharged by Soderini, now at the height of his power. However, the rank-and-file of the Perugian companies, which by then amounted to seven hundred and fifty footsoldiers, had decided to remain in the League's camp and were divided between three newly-appointed captains: the Sicilian Tommaso Gotti (younger brother of the Bands' sergeant-major), the Florentine Braccio de' Pazzi and the Corsican Gianni di Restino.

Of the one hundred and fifty light horsemen included in Orazio's *condotta*, less than a hundred were in fact still fit for service. Given the League's desperate need for good light cavalrymen, the *commissario* decided to retain their services and gave the command of the remaining eighty-four light horsemen to Iacopo Bichi [412], a Sienese *condottiere* who had been Orazio's cavalry lieutenant. Soderini also managed to retain the services of the fifteen *lancie spezzate* of the late Perugian *condottiere* (in this specific case, men who had been part of Orazio's household, who were also apprentices and bodyguards). After their first leader Count Carlo da Montone had decided to go back to Perugia, they were now operating as a small independent cavalry unit under the command of Angelo Bastardo, an Albanian who had always lived in Italy and was considered by Soderini "homo valentissimo a piè et a cavallo" [very valiant soldier on foot and on horseback] [413]. In total, Florence had now ninety-nine light horsemen at its disposal.

According to Marco del Nero, Florence's monthly expenditure for the maintenance of the Bands at the moment of Orazio's death amounted to four thousand three hundred and fifty payments of wages. In fact the soldiers enlisted in the thirteen companies, were, broadly speaking, "el quarto meno fanti che non sono le paghe" [a fourth fewer footsoldiers than are the wages], which meant more or less thirty-three hundred men. However, owing to the

[410] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., p. 1871.

[411] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 27 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f 349r.

[412] Iacopo Bichi was from Siena, but fought staunchly for the Florentine Republic during the siege of 1529-1530 until he was killed by artillery fire. The Florentines, who admired his loyalty and his valour, greatly regretted his loss; see Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, vol. II, cit., pp. 349, 371-372.

[413] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 23r/v.

high number of injured and sick, who still collected their pay, the Florentine troops could in practice count on an effective operational force of two thousand footsoldiers [414]. Owing to their high morale and to the fact that between them and Tuscany there were hundreds of miles of ravaged and dangerous territory, desertion was never a major problem for the Florentine expeditionary force.

However, there were other difficulties. The "forzo" [strength] of the Black Bands lay in their arquebusiers: at least eighteen hundred, according to the estimates made by Soderini at the beginning of the siege [415]. The quantity of lead and of gunpowder for arquebuses consumed by the Florentine forces was astonishing, and the *commissario* had to admit that "non si può servire di questa gente chi non serve della polvere et piombo" [people who do not have powder and lead cannot use these troops] [416]. To buy gunpowder and lead in the camp meant paying at least four times the normal price for it. Since the beginning of the siege of Naples the Florentine troops had had to draw regularly on French and Venetian supplies, "con grave spesa dei fanti" [with great expense for the footsoldiers], since the price was more than 2 *giuli* for a *libbra* (339.542 grams) of powder, "et el simile dico del piombo" [and the same could be said of lead]. During the first half of May alone, Florence spent more than three hundred *scudi* to refill the Bands' flasks and pouches. The *commissario* calculated that, at that rate, the monthly expense would soon exceed five hundred *scudi* [417] and constantly urged the Ten to send all the powder and lead they could find by ship. In fact, Florence directly supplied its troops only once, in June, when one thousand *libbre* of lead and three thousand of black powder were sent to Pozzuoli, escorted by Florentine troops. One third of this gunpowder, however, turned out to be *grossa* [coarse] cannon gunpowder, too costly to refine and therefore completely useless. The main obstacle to the production of black powder was the almost complete lack in Tuscany of facilities for the production of saltpetre, which had always been imported from the Kingdom of Naples. Showing his usual spirit of enterprise, ambassador Marco del Nero tried to promote the export of saltpetre from Apulia to Tuscany [418], but there was too little of it and it was too late.

On the financial side del Nero's personal initiatives were far more successful. The already considerable distance between Naples and Florence was further increased by the fact that crossing the Papal State was made dangerous by the presence of angry mobs of peasants and the barely veiled hostility of Clement VII towards the Florentine republic. The routes most frequently followed by those who carried the wages of the Black Bands were two. The first, by land, ran from Florence to Ancona, then to Ortona (near Pescara) and eventually to the camp of the League through the Apennines with a heavy escort of mounted arquebusiers. It was both extremely slow – it took over a month for the porters to reach the camp – and unsafe. But the second route, by sea, was only apparently shorter, for its complete lack of a naval force forced Florence to rely on French and Genoese ships to send the money to Naples. However, this was not a regular service, so that it left the Ten at the mercy of their

[414] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 422r/v.

[415] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 6 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 224v.

[416] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 353r.

[417] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 340r.

[418] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 8 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 396v.

allies' priorities and the *fortune del mare*. For the *commissario* and the ambassador the continual delays were a constant agony. In fact, without the ambassador's frantic activity as financial broker, the Black Bands would have probably disbanded. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Marco del Nero was a member of the Florentine moneyed elite and he used his personal wealth – as well as his extensive personal network of friendships and connections – to find the cash the Republic needed so desperately in the League's camp. The loans negotiated by the ambassador, often amounting to thousands of *scudi*, were made to him personally, and not to the Republic. However, del Nero repeatedly warned his superiors that these and other financial expedients were no solution to all the problems caused by the chronic delays in the arrival of wages. His *amici* were not a resource that could be tapped too often, at least not without occasioning "dishonore del publico et del privato" [public and personal dishonour], which, in this case, were inextricably mixed [419]. The ambassador was aware of the acute financial problems Florence was experiencing, but declared that had the Ten been aware of the damage caused by a ten day delay, they would have certainly borrowed the money to ensure its prompt delivery, even if they had to pay 20% interest on the loan – which, for the business-minded del Nero, was presumably a very poor deal [420]. The *commissario*, who lived among the troops, was even more insistent on this point. The death of Orazio had added seven hundred footsoldiers and one hundred light horsemen to his payrolls and to his worries. The Bands were suffering from the high prices and food shortages typical of the French camps and could not survive if the *capisoldi* were not distributed twenty days after the payday [421]. In the League's camp everything was expensive and the prices were "alti insino al sole" [as high as the sun]. The situation of the two companies garrisoned in Pozzuoli was even worse: only the fact that they were under the command of two loyal Florentine captains, Giuliano and Bernardo Strozzi, was preventing them from disbanding [422]. The *commissario* also asked the Ten to send a substantial sum of silver coins such as *barili* and *lucchesi*, which would have been most useful, because in practice only gold coins were circulating in the camp, "con danno comune". The shortage of *moneta* was causing a number of problems, but since Lautrec seemed to ignore it, no one dared to intervene [423]. Faced with a possible and disastrous failure if not provided with cash, Soderini asked the Ten polemically if there was somebody in Florence who thought he could keep together four thousand soldiers without using money; if so, they should send him to Naples, "perché questa è una scientia che io non posseggo, né crederei mai impararla" [because this is a science that I do not possess, nor do I believe I shall ever learn] [424].

As the elite of the League's assault troops, the Black Bands were almost constantly in action. Following a system of rotating shifts, every four days the Bands were on guard duty for twenty-four hours in the trenches whose excavation had cost them so much. And

[419] Marco del Nero to the Ten,12 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 49r.

[420] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 209v.

[421] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 20 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 9r.

[422] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 340r.

[423] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Respnsive, 131, f. 15r.

[424] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 22 June, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 7r.

unlike most other units of the army, their presence was also required for the various "factioni extraordinarie" [extraordinary engagements], which meant spearheading all the offensive operations (incursions, ambushes...) in which their skill as skirmishers and their aggressiveness were often decisive. In fact, "nuoce la openione ha di loro Monsignor Illustrissimo, et la differentia che è da questi a li altri" [harmful is *Monsignor Illustrissimo*'s opinion of them, as well as the difference between these soldiers and the others] [425]. Still only a few days before Orazio's death, Lautrec – for whom appearances were very important - congratulated the ambassador and the *commissario* "di nuovo prima della belleza di queste bande quando le vidde comparire a Troia, et molto più della virtù loro sperimentata di poi tanto delle fanterie quanto de' capitani" [again, first for the fine appearance of these troops when he saw them at Troia, and then even more for the valour shown by the infantry as well as by the captains] [426].

On the other hand, there was also some good news. One of the big problems solved by the death of Orazio was the strike of the sergeant-major of the Black Bands. After the man who had insulted him had been killed and his brother Tommaso had been given the command of a company, Giovambattista Gotti resumed his role as tactical coordinator of the Black Bands, and the positive effects of his return were soon clear. At the same time, the new approach adopted by Ugo de' Pepoli in his quality of *governatore* of the Florentine infantry aimed at reducing the excessive demands made on the Black Bands since the beginning of the siege. According to the *commissario*, not only were the Florentine troops less frequently involved in *factioni* [engagements], they were also more prudently deployed and, even more important, the light cavalrymen of Iacopo Bichi were eventually used in direct support of the infantry [427]. However, it should be observed that Orazio's handling of the Black Bands had been praised by almost everybody, except the Florentine envoys, including the enemy. In fact, it would be interesting to know how much of the allegedly rediscovered coordination of the Florentine forces was due to Count Ugo's wise leadership and how much to the sergeant-major's skill, and also how much their reduced losses can be attributed to the fact that by June most of the trenches around Naples had been excavated and the Florentine infantry was no longer contesting every inch of the terrain with the enemy.

Always respectful of the *commissario*'s authority, Count Ugo moved into Orazio's quarters a month after his predecessor's death and lived among the Florentine troops. There, the Bolognese *condottiere*, like any good commander, was forced to "tenere tavola": in other words, spend a lot of money and keep open house for the benefit of the captains and the other *homini da bene* of the Black Bands [428]. From the start, Count Ugo showed his firm desire to retain a command that, even on an informal basis, would have been enough to enhance the reputation of any commander [429]. The Black Bands were the best and most famous Italian infantry unit of the day, and for Ugo de' Pepoli they offered the chance of a

[425] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 18 June, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive 131, f. 11r/v.

[426] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 422v.

[427] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 15 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, ff. 91v-92r.

[428] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 7v; Marco del Nero to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 79v.

[429] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 44r/v.

lifetime. However, the longer the count remained in a sort of limbo as provisional *governatore* of the Florentine troops without a regular *condotta*, the greater the risks became for his *reputatione* if his command were not to be made official or if another were to replace him.

In fact, the Ten had made it clear right from the beginning that they would not appoint another captain general of infantry. Indeed, their original intention had been that after Orazio's death the Black Bands should stay under the direct command of Soderini. Still unable (or unwilling) to grasp the exact nature of the units of tactical infantry and what made them really effective, the Florentine republican leaders believed that "i capitani delle Bande Negre o la maggior parte di loro sarebbero apti ad fare ogni factione quando fussero comandati da commissarii" [the captains of the Black Bands, or most of them, would be suitable for any engagement if they were led by *commissarii*] [430]. Even though Florence promptly accepted the candidature of Count Ugo, the first choice of the Ten would have been Pedro Navarro, because the celebrated master engineer already had all the honours and commands he wanted and would not guide the Florentine troops in person. The problem for the Republic was that from the military point of view the Black Bands were an irreplaceable asset, but to maintain that status they had to stay united under independent command. And this, it had to be said, made them politically and diplomatically 'clumsy'. Not only did this situation 'unnerve' the influential minority in the Florentine governing elite which was chronically distrustful of mercenaries, but it also obstructed (both financially and politically) the ongoing secret negotiations for the appointment of Ercole d'Este, firstborn of the duke of Ferrara, as captain general of all Florentine forces. For better or worse, the man in command of the Black Bands was *de facto* in command of the whole Florentine infantry, and any new *condotta* that involved the appointment of a new permanent leader for the Bands would initiate a difficult and uneasy 'cohabitation' between this latter and the new Florentine captain general. Lautrec was in favour of the strategic alliance between Florence and Ferrara – Ercole had recently married princess Renée, daughter of the late French King Louis XII – but he also said that, either with or without a *condotta*, the Bands needed a real field commander, and, since no soldier could accept such a task without committing his honour, the sacrifices made by Count Ugo required some form of compensation [431]. Although the captain general made no mention of Ercole's youth and lack of experience, he pointed out that, apart from the political advantages that Florence would derive from the generalship, the republic would still need someone like Count Ugo "per consigliare et mettere in opera" [to advise and put into practice], and he asked for his Italian protégé to be given a "grado conveniente" [suitable rank] [432].

Soderini, who was responsible for the Florentine troops and was moved by practical considerations, strongly recommended the Bolognese *condottiere* to the Ten. The *commissario* knew very well that the duties of a captain general were not limited to the battlefield. As Lorenzo Martelli had learned during Orazio Baglioni's absence in 1527, a unit without a commander who lived among his men soon found itself declassed, cut off from decisions and exposed to all kinds of offences, especially in the League's camp, where lack of discipline was the rule.

[430] The Ten to Marco del Nero, Florence, 27 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 44, f. 139r.

[431] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 44r/v.

[432] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 79r/v.

The men of the Black Bands were no less disciplined than others, but, being Italians, they were more easily noticed, and Count Ugo had always acted as their *protectore*. In addition, anyone appointed by Florence would first have to win Lautrec's respect, whereas the young Bolognese count already enjoyed the captain general's esteem [433].

Immediately after Orazio's death, the Ten sent a representative to Mantua in great haste to discuss the terms of a possible *condotta* with Paolo Luzzasco, who had recently left Venetian service in disgrace, charged with treasonable activities in favour of the emperor. The *Serenissima* had set a price of 2,000 ducats on his head and on a wall in Venice it even had him depicted hanging by his feet. Yet, negotiations never got under way because Luzzasco had already pledged his services to the pope [434]. At the same time, however, talks with Ferrara had reached a deadlock, owing to the excessive financial demands made by the duke on behalf of his son. On 16 June, the Ten authorised the ambassador and *commissario* to try to talk Count Ugo into joining Florentine service with "honeste conditioni" [adequate terms], i.e. with a distinctly lower salary than Orazio's and an amended *condotta* (which, this time, would safeguard the city's rights and more clearly define the limits of the captain's authority) [435]. The Ten clearly resented the fact that, at this moment, they had no real choice in the matter, but eventually they agreed with their representatives that Ugo de' Pepoli had all the qualities of a good commander and they particularly appreciated his tactically 'prudent' course of action, which made it possible to save the lives of many precious Florentine soldiers. In fact, during the night of 25 June Count Ugo led the Black Bands in what was to be their last great success.

After the disastrous failure of the *encamisada*, on 18 June the Imperialists again attacked the still incomplete earthworks and trenches near La Maddalena and were repelled once again (with heavy losses) by Pedro Navarro and his Gascons [436]. However, the League's camp still had no direct safe access to the sea and to the landing point of the galleys; and thanks to the superiority of their light cavalry the Imperialist raiding parties could still use that route to re-enter the city. The League's fortified line was a sort of half-moon that extended from the marshes of La Maddalena to the hill of San Martino, but the encirclement of the city was never completed on either side. The fortress of San Martino and the slopes of the Posillipo ridge denied the League's army access to the eastern part of the city's defences.

In fact, the long ridge that divides the Cuman peninsula had always been a problem for those needing to despatch troops quickly from one side to the other. In Roman times the problem of finding an alternative to the long and difficult *via Antiniana*, which crossed what is today the hill of the Vomero, was partially solved by the famous architect Publius Cocceius Auctus, who had a tunnel dug through mount Posillipo during the civil wars at the end of the first century B.C.: the famous *Crypta Neapolitana*, still visible today [437]. The

[433] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 23v.

[434] Paolo Luzzasco to the Ten, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 129, f. 511r.

[435] The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, 16 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 44, ff. 173v-174r.

[436] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 18 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 83r.

[437] The *Crypta* is 705-meters-long, has an average width of 4.45 meters, a height of between 4.50 and 5.20 m.

gloomy *Crypta* established a more direct link between Naples, Pozzuoli and Miseno, where the Roman Imperial fleet was based. During the siege of 1528 the Imperialists used the *grotta*, as the Neapolitans called it, to bring in reinforcements and provisions – albeit little by little and never in meaningful quantities – and to launch incursions against the League's backlines. At the beginning of June, Ferrante Gonzaga used the tunnel to guide his light horsemen in a long-range raid that reached first Pozzuoli and then Aversa. There they ambushed, outmanoeuvred and captured a company of Scots men-at-arms who had rashly left the town and pursued in open order the group of Albanian stradiots used by Ferrante as bait [438].

During the night between 24 and 25 June, Gonzaga again left Naples, this time with a large party made up of 400 light cavalrymen, 200 men-at-arms, 4,000 Landsknechts, 1,000 Spaniards and most of the army's baggage wagons and foragers. The plain where the Imperialists hoped to harvest a large quantity of hay and, if possible, prepare another ambush for the enemy was eight miles from Naples, but to reach this spot Ferrante's column had first to pass through a narrow pass called the Val di Pecora. The first to cross it were the light horsemen and men-at-arms, followed by the Germans and the foragers, while the Spaniards were left behind the pass. The captain general of the Imperial light cavalry arrayed his light horsemen where he expected the enemy to arrive, sent the men-at-arms to escort the foragers, placed the Landsknechts close to the pass and sent two companies of stradiots on a scouting expedition. Ferrante did not have long to wait for his first report, for some of the Greek horsemen returned at a gallop announcing that a large contingent of enemy cavalry followed by thousands of infantrymen was converging on their position. In fact, on this occasion Lautrec had been informed of the enemy sortie in good time and to intercept it he had sent hundreds of French and Ferrarese men-at-arms, accompanied by the Florentine light cavalry of Iacopo Bichi, followed by both the Italian and German Black Bands.

Aware that a defeat would have probably entailed the loss of Naples, Ferrante ordered a retreat. But even in optimal conditions an orderly retreat through the narrow pass of Val di Pecora required time and discipline, and, as the enemy cavalrymen fell upon them wave after wave, the Imperialists ran out of both rapidly. Thousands of fleeing foragers and carters, who hurriedly abandoned their wagons when their escort was scattered by the enemy, upset the formation of the Landsknechts arrayed at the pass. The withdrawal of the Imperial forces became increasingly chaotic, turning into a classic *sauve-qui-peut* situation, with hundreds of footsoldiers, foragers and horsemen crowding the mouth of the pass, while others clambered up the hills and scattered along unexplored paths. Notwithstanding the growing confusion and the sudden attack of the League's cavalry, Ferrante managed, initially at least, to rally most of his light and heavy horsemen and to make a stand, while after the first moment of confusion part of the German troops were able to fall back into line and launch a desperate counterattack. However, it was too late: in the meanwhile, with his *ordinanza* overwhelmed and broken, Ferrante himself had been unhorsed and briefly held prisoner by the valiant Anguillotto da Pisa [439], a light horseman in Florentine service,

[438] See Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 64r/v.

[439] After the surrender of the League's army Anguillotto joined the company of light cavalry of Colonel Pier Maria de' Rossi, but in the early phases of the siege of Florence he deserted the Imperial army and entered Florentine service.

while Iacopo Bichi's nose was almost cut off by a knife wound [440]. The Imperial Landsknechts rescued the general, but were in turn overwhelmed by the onslaught of the Ferrarese and French *gendarmes*. While the arquebusiers of the Black Bands swarmed over the steep slopes of the surrounding hills and opened fire against the scattered Imperialists, Ferrante had to escape on a nag given to him by a trumpeter who had seen his commander on foot and about to be recaptured.

As ambassador del Nero put it, until that moment "non s'è facto in su questa guerra né il magior, né il più bello conflicto, et è stato più presto stratagema" [there has not been in this war either a greater or finer engagement, and this was more of a stratagem]. The Imperial force was totally dispersed, but in the end avoided annihilation because the Spanish arquebusiers managed to stop the advance of the League's pursuing troops at the mouth of the Val di Pecora and because Charles de Coucy, *seigneur* de Burie, sent to seize the entrance of the tunnel on the side of *fuorigrotta* [outside the grotto] with his French *aventuriers* had, for unknown reasons, failed to comply with his orders. Thus, most of the fugitives eventually succeeded in returning to Naples. The losses of the League were minimal, while the Imperialists lost almost four hundred men (including both the dead and prisoners) and all their baggage wagons; it took them days to reconstitute the scattered companies [441].

By July, the status of Count Ugo as commander of the Black Bands *pro tempore* and without *condotta* was becoming an embarrassment both for him and for Florence. Eventually, the Ten decided to offer the Bolognese *condottiere* the rank of *governatore* of all Florentine forces in the Kingdom of Naples and a *provvisione* of one thousand *scudi*. Soderini and del Nero, however, judged the offer dangerously inadequate, for both the rank and the *provvisione* (Orazio had been given the title of captain general of the foot and fifteen hundred *ducati* a year) were insufficient and risked wounding Count Ugo's pride. They therefore asked the Ten to reconsider their decision. As the Bolognese *condottiere* had told them, he and his peers would be satisfied with either a "titulo honorevole" [honourable title] or a *provisione* generous enough to show the esteem in which a commander was held. Count Ugo expected from the Ten either the title of *governatore generale* of all Florentine forces or a rich commission. To please the Republic, for as long as the war and the resulting extraordinary expenses lasted, he was ready to renounce the cavalry retinue customarily granted to any captain general; and even in peacetime he was prepared to have under his command a company of light, rather than of heavy, cavalrymen [442]. As we have seen, this was a considerable sacrifice for somebody who had already a company of men-at-arms under his command. After all, as del Nero pointed out, if one added together his pay and what he was able to steal, even a simple captain made more than a thousand *scudi* per year. Even the vaguest of reassurances on the part of the Ten would have been better than a weak offer [443]. Both the *commissario* and the

Captured during a skirmish, Anguillotto, already wounded, had his throat slit by his vengeful former commander; Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, vol. II, cit., pp. 319-321.

[440] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 25 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 70r.

[441] CO.DO.IN., cit., XXXVIII, pp. 503-506. Other, and often markedly different, versions of this engagement can be found in Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., pp. 64v-65v; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1952-1953; Santoro, *Dei successi*, cit., pp. 87-89.

[442] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 28 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, ff. 51v-52r.

[443] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, ff. 248v-249v.

ambassador liked the Bolognese *condottiere*, who was investing a good deal of his personal resources precisely in order to win the Ten's trust and start a lengthy career in Florentine service. The dramatic events of the second half of July, however, made all the effort spent on these negotiations fruitless.

Right from the start of the siege, both the League's army and the Imperialists had been afflicted by various epidemic diseases. The Florentines, who had strong commercial ties with Naples, probably knew very well the danger represented by the seasonal fevers that racked the region and the heat of an Italian summer, and for this reason had hoped for a quick end to the siege. By June the army of the League was oppressed by "caldi insuportabili, malattie infinite et morte continue" [unbearable heat, countless diseases and continual death], and the danger of the plague loomed over the camp [444]. A clear distinction was made between the *ordinarie* [common] illnesses, mostly malarial and dysenteric fevers, and the so-called plague, which was in fact an epidemic typhus that slowly progressed until mid-July. The Mantuan ambassador, who was also to succumb to the epidemic, left a detailed description of the symptoms of the *peste*: "Nascono febre intestine et lente nel corpo de li homeni, che nel principio pare non doverse existimare, poi in un momento rinascono con tanto furore che di subito amazza, e quando l'uomo è morto dimostra alchune pentecchie negre per la schiena" [there originates a slight internal fever in the person's body, which at first does not seem to be very serious, but soon reappears with a great fervour that immediately kills; and when a man is dead, there are a few black spots on his back] [445].

The sanitary measures were grossly inadequate from the beginning, and as the siege progressed the hygienic conditions in the League's camp became plainly catastrophic. Following the advice of Neapolitan exiles, at the beginning of the siege Lautrec had ordered the destruction of the aqueduct that supplied the city's fountains and the river Sebeto flooded the fields, forming pools of stagnant water from which, according to Paolo Giovio came "una nebbia molto grossa, sollevata sempre, ma non però domata dal sole; la quale perciò generavale febbri et le divulgava per tutto il campo" [a very dense fog, ever raised but not overcome by the sun, which generated fevers and spread them throughout the camp] [446]. Under the pressure of the huge army of the League and the scorching sun of the Italian summer, Poggioreale became a disease-ridden trap. The only consolation was that the situation was as bad inside Naples at it was outside. In particular, the *terzana* [tertian] fever, a form of malarial fever that caused febrile convulsions about once every three days, afflicted not only large numbers of the rank-and-file, but also *homini di qualità* like Navarro, Vaudemont and Lautrec himself. Most of the increasingly numerous daily casualties were due to 'ordinary' illnesses and involved private soldiers who were exhausted and undernourished and had almost no one to look after them when they fell ill or were wounded. However, between April and the end of June, typhus killed Sir Robert Jernegan, his lieutenant John Carew, the commander of the Mantuan cavalry Alberto Piattese, the Mantuan ambassador

[444] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 3v.

[445] Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 17 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Rome, 876, f. 223r.

[446] Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 67v.

Table 4. The Army of the League of Cognac at the Siege of Naples (18 June 1528).

INFANTRY	
Italian White Bands (France)	
Commanders	***Companies***
Gerolamo Castiglione	3
Count Cesare Scotti	2
Marco Antonio Cusano	2
Giovan Paolo Cossa	2
Soldiers (on paper)	2,700
Soldiers (in reality)	2,000
Gascon Foot (France)	
Commanders	**Companies**
Monsieur de Candalle	5
Baron de Bergne	2
Artigaloub	3
Three captains – each with a company	3
Soldiers (on paper)	3,900
Soldiers (in reality)	3,000
French Foot (France)	
Commanders	***Companies***
Names unknown	7
Soldiers (on paper)	2,100
Soldiers (in reality)	1,200
German Black Bands (France)	
Commanders	***Companies***
Urglie	6
Brandech	5
Count Wolf	5
Soldiers (on paper)	4,800
Soldiers (in reality)	4,000
Swiss Foot (France)	
Commanders	***Companies***
Names unknown	14
Soldiers	4,000
Italian Black Bands (Florence)	
Commanders	***Companies***
See **Table 3**	14
Soldiers	3,000
Corsican Foot (Venice)	
Commanders	***Companies***
Five captains	5
Soldiers	2,000
German Foot (Venice)	
Commanders	***Companies***
Names unknown	3
Soldiers	1,000

CAVALRY	
Light Horsemen:	
Florence	25
Venice	100
Bands of Men-at-Arms:	
Monsieur de Lautrec	100
Monsieur de Vaudemont	50
Marquis of Saluzzo	100
Count of Tenda	50
Duke of Albany	90
Duke of Lorraine	90
Monsieur d'Obigny	90
Montpezat	60
Barbisieux	40
La Val	30
Bonaval	50
Tournon	50
Lignac	30
Pomperant	30
Lafayette	60
St. André	50
Nègre Pelice	50
Robertet	40
Duke of Ferrara	100
Marquis of Mantua	80
Renzo da Ceri	50
Paolo Camillo Orsini	80
Ugo de' Pepoli	60
Guido Rangoni	50
Signor Bernabò	30
Francesco Mons	30
Giovan Girolamo Castiglione	20
Total (on paper)	1,560
Total (in reality)	800
Grand Total	
Men-at-Arms	800
'Archers'	1,200
Light Horsemen	125
Footsoldiers	20,000

Ludovico Ceresara and the papal nuncio. On 30 June, *provveditore* Alvise Pisani died of "febbre terzana doppia" [double tertian fever] [447]. Too sick to continue to serve, the Bands'

[447] On the last days and death of Alvise Pisani, see Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, pp. 167, 174, 185, 190, 207, 237.

muster officer *ser* Bernardino took his leave at the beginning of June [448], and for the same reason in July Captain Iacomo Filippo went back to Spoleto and was replaced by Angelo Bastardo [449]. To quote *commissario* Soderini, "e' pericoli della guerra sono e' minori" [the dangers of war are the least we have to think about] [450]. Since there was really nothing he could do and since the *peste* had already entered his *casa*, Marco del Nero defended himself from the danger by trying not think about it too much and by trusting in divine assistance [451]. On the eve of the dramatic turning point of mid-July, the Florentine ambassador estimated that half of the army suffered from some illness [452]. Pietro Lando (1462-1545), the Venetian *provveditore alle galere* and future *doge*, was even more pessimistic in his report to the Senate: no one really knew the number of sick soldiers; scores of dead lay naked and unburied; the vapours emitted by the swamps surrounding the camp covered the sun even at midday; "Dio ne aiuti. Da ogni parte non si sente salvo ruina e morte" [God help us. We hear only of ruin and death everywhere] [453].

By June, skirmishes, epidemics and desertion had considerably weakened both armies, but the losses affected the League's army more severely because a wider front was covered and because Lautrec stuck to his choice of a close-range blockade. When, on 18 June, the captain general ordered the camp drummers to sound *a l'arme* [the alarm] in order to check the effective strength of his troops, the Ferrarese ambassador calculated (Table 4) that the League's army could count on fewer than 800 lances of heavy cavalry (most without supporting archers), 125 light horsemen, 2,000 Italians of the White Bands, 3,000 Gascons, 1,200 French, 4,000 Landsknechts of the Black Bands, 4,000 Swiss, 3,000 Italians of the Black Bands, 2,000 Corsicans and 1,000 Landsknechts in Venetian service [454]. Although these figures may look impressive, they were in fact insufficient to do more than contain what remained of the Imperial army, quite apart from looking less and less like the crushing force needed to guarantee control of the continental part of the *Regno* for the faction of the Angevin *baroni*. To this one must add that the composition of the League's army was unbalanced: it did not have a sufficient quantity of the particular types of troop to carry out such an undertaking. Above all, the overwhelming superiority of the French in men-at-arms could not make up for the limited capacity of initiative and reaction caused by the shortage of light horsemen. From the end of June the Imperialists had virtually ceased their attacks on the League's fortified line and, taking advantage of the fact that their light cavalry had been in control of the roads right from the start of the siege, directed their efforts against the French backlines and smaller garrisons. Even though the cattle and wheat the Imperial raiding parties succeeded in bringing back to Naples was certainly not enough to improve the city's critical logistical situation, it was enough to give hope to the besieged

[448] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 7 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 14r.

[449] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 169r.

[450] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 7r.

[451] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 201r.

[452] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 211r.

[453] Pietro Lando to the Venetian Senate, 19 July 1528, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, p. 293.

[454] Cantelmi to the duke of Ferrara, 18 June, ASMo, Carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9, foliation is absent.

and force the commanders of the League to deploy large bodies of infantry outside the camp: a costly replacement that also failed to make up for the lack of a few companies of light cavalry. By the end of June, even *commissario* Soderini argued that the recruitment of four hundred light horsemen would have ensured the final victory of the League [455].

There were, moreover, other discouraging signals. The excavation of the trench that, by way of the marshes of La Maddalena, was to seal off Naples from the east and link the League's camp to the sea and to its fleet, was never completed. According to *provveditore* Pisani this was due to the marshy soil [456], but both the *commissario* and the Florentine ambassador blamed rather the dangerous inertia and lack of perseverance of the French; "in effetto la natura de' franzesi non porgie diligentia. Fanno spesso buon proposito et buoni ordini, et non gli hanno a pena cominciati a mettere in opera che se ne raffreddano... bisogna pigliarsi da costoro quello che da loro la natura" [in effect the character of the French does not include diligence. They often have good intentions and good plans, but no sooner have they started to put them into practice than they fall by the wayside... we have to accept their character as it is] [457].

By June it was generally thought that the League's army needed a substantial injection of fresh units of infantry and light cavalry. Lautrec, however, chose a different and far more ambitious course of action. Using some of the prisoners captured at the *grotta*, he resumed the *pratica* with the Imperial Landsknechts [458], and even started a new one with two companies of Albanian light cavalry in Spanish service, promising them either safe passage home or employment in French service. His strategy for the continuation of the siege was based on two assumptions: that the collapse of the backbone of the Imperial army was imminent and that the French fleet of Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, *sieur* de Barbisieux, great seneschal of Guyenne and lieutenant general of the French Atlantic fleet, would soon bring both the money and the fresh troops his army needed.

As far as the first point was concerned, Lautrec's hopes were not unfounded; even though they were carrying no reinforcements apart from their usual fighting complements, when the twenty-two *vele* [sails] of the Venetian squadron – sixteen galleys and six other ships (*fuste* and *brigantini*) – started to arrive outside Naples between 7 and 10 June, it seemed that the emperor was finally running out of luck. On 9 June, the prince of Orange barely managed to extract from the Landsknechts (who were already packing) the promise that they would serve at least until the end of that month, and he not only had to swear that relief, by both land and sea, was on its way, but also to promise that that "tutto il vino s'accomunassi et si distribuissi per equale tanto al piccolo quanto al grande" [all the wine would be gathered and distributed to the small and the great alike]. To this end, every house, *palazzo* and monastery of Naples was thoroughly searched, but, according to del Nero's sources, the Imperialists succeeded in finding enough wine for less than six days [459].

[455] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 15v.

[456] Alvise Pisani to the Venetian Senate, 29 May 1528, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, p. 30

[457] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 25 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 69r.

[458] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 1 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 194r/v.

[459] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 10 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 39v; see also Gerardo da Ca' di Mosto to the duke of Milan, 11 June, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, p. 116.

On 11 June 1528 Lautrec even organised a show of force for the benefit of the besieged. As the Venetian galleys arrived *in ordinanza* in front of Naples, the Doria fleet went out to meet them and, after politely hailing one another with a salvo of artillery, the two formations veered towards Naples and opened fire - this time in earnest. The harbour's ordnance responded in kind to the challenge, accompanied by the cannons of the land fortifications. From the League's camp in Poggioreale, Lautrec ordered his artillery to open fire three times, followed by a double round of all the arquebuses "che parea qua che 'l mondo andasse in romore" [so that it seemed that all hell had been let loose] [460]. An attack against the heavily fortified harbour of Naples was out of question, but the arrival of the Venetian squadron allowed the naval forces of the League to adopt a more offensive approach. The Doria squadron made its base in Pozzuoli, between Ischia and Naples, while six Venetian galleys went to support the prince of Melfi's troops (1,500 footsoldiers and his company of men-at-arms), who had entered French service in its attack on Gaeta, and two further galleys patrolled the mouth of the river Garigliano [461]. To enforce the blockade of Naples the Venetians relied prevalently on small *fuste* and *fregate*, the same kind of ship used to run the blockade [462]. Navarro even planned to use the available Venetian oarsmen to work on the half-finished trench at la Maddalena, but the *provveditore* objected that this meant dismantling his fleet.

By the end of June the Imperial relief army, whose imminent arrival had been announced to the Landsknechts on many occasions, was still in northern Italy [463], while the galleys of Spain and Sicily were nowhere to be seen. The morale of the German troops in Naples had reached rock bottom. The period of twenty days, for which they had promised to stay with the Spaniards "ad una vita et ad una morte" [united to the death], had expired, and on 1 July the Imperial Landsknechts assembled once again in a Neapolitan *piazza*. To understand the predicament of the Imperial cause at this juncture, we must remember that during the 1520s the 'democratic' aspects of the Landskecht tradition were still very strong and the power of the general assembly of the soldiers, the *Gemein*, was respected and feared even by the colonels, who constantly tried to limit its powers and prevent it from assembling [464].

Initially, the assembly simply refused to give the the prince of Orange another hearing. Some of the Germans – probably incited by Lautrec's agents – grumbled that if the prince could not pay them, somebody else (i.e. the French) would. Others argued that, since they had been left without wages and sufficient victuals for so long, they should no longer consider themselves bound by the oath of fidelity to the emperor, but should be ready to swear that they would serve no one else. The majority, however, remained undecided, so the *consiglio* was unable to express a common line of action and met practically every day, and after every session the Landsknechts would break up into small groups of thirty or so and ani-

[460] Gerardo da Ca' di Mosto to the duke of Milan, 11 June 1528, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, p 116.

[461] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 28 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 51r.

[462] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 4 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 205v.

[463] On the campaign fought in Lombardy and on the disastrous attempt to storm the walls of Lodi (on 30 June 1528), see Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1941-1946.

[464] See Baumann, *I Lanzichenecchi*, pp. 120-123.

matedly discuss the matter among themselves [465]. On 7 July (a Tuesday) Lautrec assured Marco del Nero that by the end of that week the Germans would leave Naples. And even if they did not, the League would retain the upper hand: the duke of Brunswick was still besieging faraway Lodi, while the arrival of Barbisieux's fleet and the much-needed money, albeit alarmingly late, was still considered imminent [466].

What the captain general of the League did not realise was that he himself was walking on very thin ice. Since the failure of the Sardinian enterprise (see Appendix 4) relations between Andrea Doria and Francis I had deteriorated considerably. A series of personal *faux pas* by the king, compounded with the French policy to make the Genoese subject city of Savona a centre for both the economic and strategic control of the western part of Liguria [467], prompted the old *condottiere* of the sea, whose contract was due to expire at the end of June, to reconsider his position in French service at a very critical moment. In the end, *messer* Andrea decided that it was easier to forgive the sack of his native city by the Spaniards years earlier than to overlook Francis I's manoeuvring against him and, above all, against Genoa's privileges and status as the dominant city of Liguria. In its timing and political sensitivity the operation that led to the official 'conversion' of Andrea Doria was a masterpiece of Habsburg secret diplomacy: a great strategic success that was paradoxically favoured by the crushing tactical defeat suffered by the Neapolitan squadron at Capo d'Orso.

Negotiations began in Sorrento between Filippino Doria and Don Antonio de Ijar, who officially had been sent there by the prince of Orange to establish the ransom of the marquis of Vasto. Matters were soon resolved during subsequent talks between *messer* Andrea and the marquis himself, who was then sent to Genoa together with Ascanio and Camillo Colonna on two galleys (one being the former Imperial *Capitana*). Once in Genoa, the three illustrious prisoners were "da Andrea recevuti, et condutti in casa soa, non como prigioni, ma da signori como erano, et accarezati, con concederli di andare per la città sopra la soa parola" [received by Andrea and led to his home, not as prisoners but as the gentlemen they were, and pampered, being allowed to move around the city on their word] [468]. The French realized what was going on and tried, *in extremis*, to recall the famous *condottiere* to the cause of the *Cristianissimo* or at least prevent him from entering Imperial service. Though at a certain point *messer* Andrea and his prisoners/guests were forced to leave Genoa and withdraw to the Doria stronghold of Lerici because of the approach of Barbisieux's French fleet, the negotiations with the emperor were a complete success [469].

Even though all this had begun close by, the defection of the Doria forces caught Lautrec almost completely by surprise. By the end of June he had started to receive alarming reports from his informants about *messer* Andrea's contacts with the Imperialists and about the suspicious increase in the number of ships slipping into Naples through Filippino's line of

[465] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 1 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 194r/v.

[466] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 7 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 187r.

[467] A. Pacini, *Genoa and Charles V*, in *The World of Emperor Charles the Fifth*, forthcoming.

[468] Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, cit., f. 35v.

[469] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1954-1957; Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, ff. 36v-38r.

blockade. Finally, on 29 June, he received letters directly from Clement VII, in which the pope confirmed that "Andrea Doria per mala contenteza si era licentiato dal Re, et che finalmente si partirebbe di qua el conte Philippino al più lungo fra VIII o X giorni" [Andrea Doria with dissatisfaction had quit the service of the King and Count Philippino would eventually leave here at the latest between 8 or 10 days]. Rather ironically, Marco del Nero assumed that once again the pope was lying and he indeed played a major role in appeasing Lautrec's anger against Count Filippino. For instead of a heated letter from the captain general, Filippino not only received a *missiva* full of "dolce parole" [sweet words], but was also, rather ironically, given back many of the important (and eminently ransomable) prisoners he had captured at Capo d'Orso but had been previously forced to hand over to the League [470]. But this time – for a change – His Holiness was telling the truth, for Filippino had already been instructed by *messer* Andrea to abandon the siege of Naples as soon as possible. Using as a pretext some grisly rumours about French attacks on Doria galleys and whole Genoese crews cut to pieces (rumours spread by his own men), on 3 July the Doria squadron left the gulf of Naples [471]. Although del Nero dismissed Filippino's move as relatively unimportant or, given the increasing idleness of the Genoese forces, even positive, the blockade of Naples rapidly became once again ineffective. On 15 July, when all the Venetian galleys, except those sent to Gaeta, were obliged to leave the gulf to take on biscuit supplies in Calabria, a stream of ships loaded with provisions for the besieged entered the harbour. Even worse, the powerful sirocco wind would soon start to blow from the south-east, making it almost impossible for the galleys to intercept sailing ships coming from Sicily. Moreover, a point the besiegers were unaware of, the French fleet – whose appearance could have broken the deadlock in the Landsknechts' council – was further away than they thought.

In Naples, the prince of Orange eventually managed to persuade his Landsknechts that the Doria squadron would soon be back, but this time to protect the entry of supplies from Sicily in the harbour of Naples, and that before the end of the month "verrà tal presidio di Andrea Doria et di Cicilia che saranno bastanti a levarci di qua" [will arrive such reinforcements from Andrea Doria and from Sicily that they will suffice to get us out of here]. The prince was telling his men a half-truth: the defection of Andrea Doria from the League's camp to Charles V's could not immediately reverse the desperate situation of the Imperialists, but it certainly reshuffled the cards for good, and now anything was possible. The Germans accepted the single *scudo* each that they had previously refused and promised to remain faithful to the emperor until the end of the month [472]. It was not much, but it was what the Imperial captain general needed. Ultimately the outcome of the siege of Naples was to be decided by a handful of days saved on one side and lost on the other. Lautrec believed that his plans had been simply delayed and not thwarted, but the propitious moment had passed. On 13 July he fell ill with *terzana* fever, and, because of his style of leadership, his absence risked paralyzing the already weakened army of the League. Moreover, the worst suspicions of the *collegati* were confirmed at this time by the news that,

[470] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 55r/v.

[471] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 4 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 205r/v.

[472] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 218r/v.

while they were waiting on tenterhooks, the French fleet had been besieging Civitavecchia – the main harbour of the papal state, which had been occupied by the Imperialists after the Sack of Rome – at the request of Clement VII. This was another "colpo di amico" [friendly blow] from the pope, as Marco del Nero put it [473].

However, the eyes of the commanders of the League were not the only ones diligently scanning the horizon. Probably no less anxiously than their enemy counterparts, the Imperial captain general and his staff officers were assembling their remaining forces and preparing them to deliver a blow that would irrevocably turn the tide of the campaign.

[473] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 211r.

3. The Defeat

"... senza forsi, non si ritroverà in tutte le historie antique et moderne una tanta ruina de così florido esercito...". [474]

Giovanni Salvago on the fate of the army of the League

The French fleet, which amounted to nineteen galleys, two *fuste* and four *brigantini*, arrived in sight of the shore of La Maddalena on 18 July, early in the morning. That day, however, the rough sea prevented monsieur de Barbisieux from unloading his precious cargo, the money sent by the *Cristianissimo*, and from bringing ashore the reinforcements and his illustrious passengers, the young prince of Navarre Charles de Foix-Albret and his large retinue of French noblemen. The landing place most frequently used by the League's galleys was close to the bridge on the river Sebeto, not far from the church of La Maddalena, which stood outside Naples's walls, more or less two hundred *passi* [paces] from the Bastione del Carmine, and in sight of the Imperial lookout posts. The stretch of land between the half-finished trenches of the League and the seashore presented a conspicuous gap in the League's fortified line, and to cover the landing of the long-awaited reinforcements and the money-filled coffers sent by Francis I, Lautrec's troops would be forced to leave their ramparts and face an enemy attack in the open field close to the walls of Naples for the first time in months. In his *Mémoires*, Blaise de Montluc (c. 1502-1577) has left a detailed and action-packed account of the events that took place on 19 July, when tenders and skiffs eventually started to shuttle between the shore and the French galleys [475].

While the main bodies – the *bataillons* [battalions], as Montluc called them – of the Gascons and the Black Bands, along with most of the French heavy cavalry, took up position behind the ramparts, a covering force made up of the arquebusiers of Montluc's company, 200-300 arquebusiers from the *colonnello* of Candale [476] and 300-400 from the Black Bands was sent to the crossroads near the church of La Maddalena, together with the *colonnello* of Landsknechts in Venetian service (1,000 footsoldiers) and at least one company of *gendarmes*. From his advanced position, young Montluc (who still had his left arm in splints and fastened to his chest) was the first to sight the 500 Spanish infantrymen and 300 light cavalrymen [477], led respectively by Juan de Urbina and Ferrante Gonzaga, who tried to reach the League's landing place by using the walls behind the church to shield their advance and sneak behind the League's covering troops. In the meanwhile, many of the high-ranking officers of the League – among them the marquis of Saluzzo, Count Ugo de' Pepoli and the Gascon Colonels Candale and Artigaloub – had gone on board the French

[474] "... without a doubt, one would not find in all of ancient and modern history so devastating a ruin of such a flourishing army...".

[475] Montluc, *Mémoires de Messire Blaise de Montluc*, cit., pp. 71-85.

[476] Charles de Foix-Candale, count of Astarac, nephew of Lautrec and, according to Montluc, very promising protégé of Pedro Navarro.

[477] CO.DO.IN., cit.., XXXVIII, p. 513.

Capitana galley and were engaged in giving a very formal and lengthy welcome to the prince, who had a meal with them before he left the ship. Montluc went to warn his superiors, shouting to the crews of the skiffs which shuttled between the seashore and the fleet that they should warn all those "seigneurs" [gentlemen] who "estoient encores dedans s'amusant à faire des accolades" [were still on board enjoying the exchange of accolades] that the enemy was coming and that they should think about the combat, "s'ilz vouloient" [if they wished]. Montluc was quite correct in regarding the delay of almost three hours caused by all these nice but futile ceremonies as catastrophic.

The landing of the prince of Navarre took place in a far less dignified way than expected, for Count Ugo, Candale and Artigaloub rushed to reach their respective units and the prince had to leave his luggage behind. He was given a horse to reach the League's camp at a gallop, while the gentlemen of his retinue, who, as Montluc pointed out rather caustically, "n'eurent pas grand loisir de s'arrester avec nous" [were not overly eager to remain with us], had to rely on their legs. The money and the prince were brought to safety in the main *alloggiamento*, but by then the covering troops of the League were under attack and most were unable to disengage. Located close to the shoreline, Montluc and his company came under the fire of a French galley that mistook them for the enemy, but managed nevertheless to repel a first attack of a group of enemy arquebusiers. Further inland, however, things were going badly for the League. The *gendarmes* led by Jean de Laval, *seigneur* de Chateaubriand, were caught in the open and fired upon by Spanish arquebusiers and, as the French started to withdraw at a steady trot, they were charged by both the Imperial cavalry and infantry "de cul et de teste" [from the rear and from the front]. Eventually, the *ordinanza* of Laval's men-at-arms broke up; those who could, galloped back towards the League's fortifications, but found on their way the *colonnello* of the Venetian Landsknechts, which was arrayed on the road that led to the rampart gate. The Germans could not suddenly open their ranks to give way to the French, and the *gendarmes* were out of control. When the Imperial troops fell upon them, neither the footsoldiers nor the men-at-arms, who were hopelessly entangled, could mount an adequate resistance. With their ranks in disarray, the *Serenissima*'s Landsknechts were quickly defeated and their flags captured. In vain Count Ugo dismounted and led his *lancie spezzate* and forty arquebusiers of the Black Bands into the fray. After offering a stiff resistance to the enemy, most of Pepoli's men were either killed or wounded, and the Bolognese *condottiere* himself was taken prisoner [478]. The troops of the League outside the rampart found themselves cut off. The young Colonel Candale was badly wounded and taken prisoner [479], as were many of the French *gentilhommes* who had just arrived with the prince of Navarre. Pursued by the enemy infantry, Blaise de Montluc and his Gascon arquebusiers made for the gate, but to cross it they had to force a passage through the ranks of Gonzaga's light cavalry by opening fire on them. The gate of the League's rampart was made of stone and, as Montluc says, it was a pre-existent structure – possibly some kind of arch, or the gate of a *villa*'s park – that had been incorporated into the defensive system designed by Navarro. It had a vaulted roof and a

[478] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 221r/v.

[479] Three days after his capture he was sent back to the camp on his word to recover from his wounds, but there he soon died.

dozen men could have crossed it walking side by side; but, even though it had hinges, there were no doors. Having reached the relative safety of the camp, Montluc and his men took cover in the trenches behind the rampart as the Spanish arquebusiers arrived and began to open fire from their side of the gate, thereby creating through it a localized, but effective, killing zone. The Spaniards could not yet cross over the gateway, but the troops of the League did not dare to approach it.

The situation was desperate. If the enemy entered the defensive perimeter and established a bridgehead, everything would be lost. After half an hour of furious shooting, the marquis of Saluzzo crept into the shallow trenches of the League and told Colonel Artigaloub to lead his men through the gate to regain control of it. The colonel refused to comply, arguing that he would lose too many soldiers. Desperate, the marquis went to the trenches occupied by the Black Bands and gave them the same orders. At once, the Italians left their trenches and marched in good order towards the gate, where they were joined by the sheepish Gascons. After a furious assault, the troops of the League regained control of both ends of the *portal* and would have gone farther, but the marquis, who just wanted to cut the losses at the end of a disastrous day, blocked their advance [480]. Fully in control of the field for the first time since the beginning of the siege, the Imperialists withdrew to Naples. As Marco del Nero wrote to the Ten, "se la battaglia di Vostre Signorie ritirandosi già li lanzichinech et li guasconi, non havesse fatto testa gagliarda et combattendo ributtato li spagnioli, sarebbero venuti fino a'nostri ripari, con troppo danno di tutto lo exercito" [if the squadron of Your Lordships, when the Landsknechts and the Gascons were already withdrawing, had not resisted valiantly and driven back the Spaniards, they would have come up to our lines, bringing too much harm to the whole army]. Nonetheless, in the end the ambassador was forced to admit that "la giornata è stata trista per noi" [the day was sad for us] [481]. According to *commissario* Soderini, the casualties of the League amounted to five hundred soldiers killed – at least one third of them from the Black Bands – and as many captured [482].

For this defeat, and for the capture of Count Ugo, both Soderini and del Nero openly blamed the French men-at-arms and pointed out how the incompetence and cowardice of the *gendarmes* had by then utterly disheartened the footsoldiers, who, after so many blunders, knew that they could not count on the support of their cavalry, "come sarìa necessario. Et come fanno gli spagnioli, che gli hanno perfetti, et se ne servono assai" [as would be necessary. And as the Spanish do, for they have perfect ones (horsemen) and use them frequently] [483]. Moreover, such an evident setback in full sight of the city had compromised the negotiations between the League and the Imperial Landsknechts.

To worsen an already grim situation, the Imperialists had not seen a great number of troops disembark from the French galleys, and in the days that followed the engagement of 19 July, the situation of Lautrec's army emerged in all its seriousness. Everybody had assumed

[480] Montluc, *Commentaires*, cit., pp. 82-84.

[481] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 222r.

[482] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 177r.

[483] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 222r.

that, together with the prince of Navarre, the French fleet would bring enough money and troops to revitalize the camp. However, besides the household of Charles de Foix-Albret and a certain number of gentlemen-adventurers, only eight hundred footsoldiers had in fact landed, and the money carried by Francis I's paymasters was insufficient even to free Lautrec from the debts he had run up with his own officers while he was awaiting it. Years later, while writing his *Commentaires*, the Marshal of France Blaise de Montluc gave vent to his resentment, pointing out how, in 1528, he and his fellow captains could not help feeling abandoned by their king and disappointed by his ministers, knowing that the enemy – and in particular the Landsknechts – were drawing obvious conclusions from the arrival of such a weak force. The Imperial commanders now knew that the French were no less isolated than they were, and that the final outcome of the conflict would be decided without the intervention of substantial reinforcements on either side.

On 19 July the League had lost control of the field and had no means to regain it. The wind had changed, and it was not just the sirocco that was starting to blow from the south-east, swelling the sails of the provision-laden ships that were entering the harbour of Naples. The dealings between Lautrec and the Imperial Landsknechts came to an end, as drinking the much-despised water and waiting patiently for the wages that they were owed became a source of pride to the Germans, who "hanno preso in gloria il soportare ogni stento per vincere, et sono più obstinati che mai" [who proudly accepted to withstand every hardship to win, and are more obstinate than ever] [484]. On 25 July, the Spanish community in Naples celebrated the day of the apostle St. James with particular pomp and ostentation (particularly worshipped even today in Spain as *Santiago Matamoros* [St. James Moor-Slayer]), and with good reason, because in those days – either thanks to divine assistance or, more probably, to the unintentional 'quarantine' imposed on the city by the besiegers and to the more wholesome quarters of the besieged – the typhus epidemic that had been decimating both the Imperial army and the Neapolitan population over the last month was finally contained [485].

Conversely, outside the city walls, the typhoid fever, which up until that moment had been somewhat limited, literally exploded, spreading quickly among the troops of the League, including the Florentine Black Bands [486]. Every day the sick multiplied "a maraviglia" [amazingly] [487], and by 5 August, thanks to the report of Count Ugo, who had been exchanged for five Spanish captains the day before, del Nero estimated that the number of soldiers fit for combat in the League's camp was more or less equivalent to all the Imperial forces in Naples: in other words, no more than seven thousand men [488]. The Bolognese *condottiere* himself was so ill that he had to leave the camp and go to Capua, where he died three weeks later, shortly before the defeat of the League, without either resuming his office of temporary *governatore* or signing a *condotta* with Florence. By the beginning of August,

[484] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 24 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, ff. 228v-229r.

[485] Rosso, *Historia*, cit., p. 43.

[486] Pietro Lando to the Venetian Senate, 13 July 1528, in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, p. 301.

[487] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 25 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 240r.

[488] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 5 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 365v.

the company of Scipione da Imola, who had left the camp in July, was in such a bad state that it was disbanded, and the few remaining soldiers were divided among the other captains [489], but this was not enough to make good the losses inflicted by the enemy and by disease. Moreover, the soldiers recruited locally were riff-raff who (being close to home) tended to desert, so that the ambassador asked the Ten to send two thousand Tuscan footsoldiers, "sciolti" (i.e. not organised into companies), by sea, to swell the ranks of the Black Bands [490]. Of the staff of the *commissario*, the treasurer Filippo Altoviti, the paymaster Marcello Strozzi and Francesco Ferrucci [491] (1489-1530) – the future hero of the defence of the Florentine Republic – were so ill that by mid-August they were unable to leave their beds [492]. Of the sixteen members of the *famiglia* of the Florentine ambassador, only his secretary *messer* Bruno and a groom were still alive [493].

Swept by typhus and by malarial and dysenteric fevers, the Florentine cavalry soon ceased to exist as an operational unit. From his sickbed, Jacopo Bichi asked the Ten to take care of his family; "delle cose di qua non dirò altro, se non che se prima le gente loro erano la reputatione di questo essercito, adesso sono si può quasi dire el campo proprio, ché altro non c'è – più dì sono – che lo sostenga che queste bande. Né altro ci è restato di formidabile appresso li nimici" [about the things going on here I would say no more, other than that if first your troops made the reputation of this army, now it would almost be possible to say that they are what remains of the camp, for there is nothing else – for some days now – that sustains it, except for these troops. And nothing else is left here which appears formidable to the enemy] [494]. Every night Spanish mock attacks caused the camp's alarm to be sounded two or three times, while exhaustion and sleep deprivation were giving the *coup de grace* to the already weary and debilitated soldiers [495].

As Lautrec was recovering with difficulty from his illness, he began to take note of the real situation of his army; and for the first time Marco del Nero noticed the cracks in the confident mask of the captain general, who "vorrebbe hora haver facto quello che mai fin qui se gli è possuto persuadere" [would now have done what no one would have been able to

[489] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 9 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 349r.

[490] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 5 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 365v.

[491] The bibliography on the life and the undertakings of Francesco Ferrucci, who surived the siege of Naples to go down (on the basis of a curious series of circumstances) in history as the epitome and extreme defender of the Florentine Republic 'murdered' at the battle of Gavinana by the Neapolitan *condottiere* Maramaldo, is almost as vast and complex as the one on Giovanni of the Black Bands. A good point of departure to study the figure of Ferrucci is provided by two useful, if outdated, collections of documents: *Vite di italiani illustri: vita di Francesco Ferrucci, Raccolta di opere e documenti riguardanti la Storia d'Italia; lettere di Francesco Ferrucci al Magistrato dei Dieci della Guerra e a Ceccotto Tosinghi*, in "Archivio Storico Italiano", IV (1853); *Francesco Ferruccio e la guerra di Firenze del 1529-1530*, edited by F. Curzio, Florence, Pellas, 1889. Ferrucci was the positive hero of the novel *L'assedio di Firenze* written by Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, who also wrote one of his many biographies: *Vita di Francesco Ferruccio*, Milan, Guigoni, 1863.

[492] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 347r.

[493] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 368r.

[494] Iacopo Bichi to the Ten, 17 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 132, f. 106r.

[495] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 347v.

persuade him to do before] [496]. Besides killing or incapacitating the rank-and-file by the thousand, the epidemics had left the army almost leaderless: by the end of July, only *messer* Ambrogio da Fiorenza was still active "per conto del Consiglio" [for the Council], while, "per conto della guerra" [for the war], the marquis of Saluzzo and Count Guido Rangoni were the only "persone di recapito" [responsible parties] still fit for service, and neither enjoyed Florence's trust. Pedro Navarro, the *maestro di campo*, Guillaume de Rochefort and the count of Vaudémont – Lautrec's second-in-command – were either ill or still too weakened to take service, while the captain general of the ordnance was dead. The *gendarmerie* had lost much of its strength, as the men-at-arms, either ill or feigning illness, had left disease-ridden Poggioreale for the more wholesome *ville* around Naples; and by the beginning of August in the League's camp it was impossible to put together one hundred *cavalli*. At the same time, the infantry troops "per li morti sono tanto diminuite et per li moltissimi amalati tanto indebolite che chi non lo vedessi a pena non lo crederebbe. Et è da pregare dio che e' non se n'habbi a fare experientia" [due to the deaths are greatly diminished and because of the many sick so greatly weakened that anyone who does not see this would hardly believe it. And we must pray to God that we will not be put to the test].

However, in the days that followed the events of 19 July, Renzo da Ceri, who had arrived with the prince of Navarre, had carried out a personal and thorough inspection of the League's camp and, having assessed the hazards of the situation, proceeded to deal with the problem at its roots, that is, by confronting Lautrec. At the time he ranked high in Francis I's favour and was very much the leading figure among the group of great Italian *condottieri* who had embraced the French cause. Moreover, having no rank in Lautrec's army he had no reason to be afraid of his disapproval. Da Ceri spoke frankly to the captain general, criticizing his conduct and breaking the veritable conspiracy of silence of which the French commander-in-chief, thanks to his attitude, had become the chief victim. Too many things had been left unsaid for far too long. Finally *signor* Renzo managed to persuade Lautrec of the extreme need to recruit fresh troops of infantry and light cavalry, and on 27 July he was hurriedly dispatched to L'Aquila with the task of enlisting up to four thousand Italian foot-soldiers and all the light horsemen he could find between Rome and the Abruzzi. Renzo promised to be back with the reinforcements within twenty days – "che se sia fra un mese" [even if it were in a month], wrote a realistic del Nero, "non farà poca diligentia" [he would hardly be slacking].

The remaining forces of the League shifted to a purely defensive mode, guarding a defensive perimeter that, as Soderini pointed out, had been too long even when the besiegers had been far more numerous at the start of the *impresa*. Nevertheless, Lautrec refused stubbornly to reduce the overextended front of his army until the end [497]. Only a few days after their defeat on 19 July, the troops of the League found themselves besieged in their own camp. The Imperial raiding parties multiplied their efforts, patrolling the *campagna* and constantly probing the enemy defensive potential, making all activity immediately outside the trenches positively dangerous. Certain daring individuals, disguised, entered the camp itself. Without cavalry, the forces of the League had lost all capacity to react.

[496] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 235r.

[497] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 347v.

Frantically, a revived Lautrec multiplied his efforts to recruit new companies of light horsemen. He also recalled the Venetian stradiots from Apulia and ordered the numerous men-at-arms who were fit for service yet 'refreshing' themselves in nearby villages, to go back to the camp at Poggioreale. Given the excellent performance of the Black Bands, the captain general asked Florence to send Naples the two thousand Tuscan footsoldiers previously destined for Lombardy [498]. Lautrec had already asked the general François de Bourbon, count of Saint-Pol (1491-1545), who was campaigning with another French army in northern Italy, to send him at least three thousand footsoldiers. Saint-Pol, however, prevaricated and even refused to acknowledge the captain general of the League as his superior. Apparently, Odet de Foix had been away from the French court for too long.

The hope excited by Lautrec's new provisions was as short-lived as his recovery from his illness: there was neither the time nor the money to implement them. Without the arrival of substantial reinforcements, the breakdown of the League's army could not be stopped. On 1 August Imperial troops from Naples sacked Somma, without the *gendarmes* and light horsemen stationed there offering any resistance, "cosa di gran vergogna" [a very shameful thing] [499], and one week later (8 August) the Spaniards captured the garrison of Somma. On 7 August two hundred Landsknechts of the Black Bands were attacked by the Imperialists while escorting a convoy of victuals and, after rushing to take shelter in two houses, surrendered "molto vilmente" [in a very cowardly way], while twelve of Captain Gian Moro's arquebusiers, who were barricaded in a nearby church, kept on fighting and managed to avoid capture [500]. By mid-August, the enemy light cavalry had forced the League's troops to abandon definitively the landing point at the mouth of the Sebeto, and the camp lost direct contact with the galleys [501]. "/ / Noi siamo assediati da ogni banda di pane, di vino, di carne, di ogni altro refrigerio, tale che e' fanti si muoiono di fame \ \" [We are cut off on every side from bread, wine and meat and every other refreshment, to the point that the footsoldiers are dying of hunger]. At the same time the horses and the other animals of the camp could not be brought safely to the drinking troughs which were outside the ramparts of Poggioreale and exposed to enemy attack [502]. As the *humore adusto* [burning humour] and the *terzana doppia* that plagued him progressed, the letters of Marco del Nero became shorter, and he was forced to delegate a part of his duties to the *commissario*. The Ten had eventually granted the ambassador the leave he had been requesting, but he could not now abandon the camp: disease-ridden though it was, it was still the safest place for him to stay.

On the night between 16 and 17 August, monsieur de Lautrec died of 'catarrh', and was buried without pomp in his own quarters, inside the *masseria* of the duke of Montalto at Poggioreale, in order to keep his demise secret for as long as possible. Almost all accounts

[498] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, ff. 235v-236r.

[499] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 2 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 376r.

[500] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 9 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f, 361r.

[501] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 347r.

[502] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, 131, f. 368r.

of the death of Odet de Foix agree on one point: he died a desperate man [503], his spirit crushed by the consequences of the lies which, with his uncompromising and haughty attitude, he had induced his soldiers to tell him. According to the Ferrarese ambassador in Naples, Lautrec passed away saying that he could not believe in a God who gave victory to the Spaniards [504].

Since monsieur de Vaudémont had also died in the meantime, Lautrec's place was taken by the marquis of Saluzzo, but by that time all remaining hopes of either continuing the siege or withdrawing safely from Naples resided in the arrival of the reinforcements led by Renzo da Ceri. Da Ceri, however, owing to both a scarcity of money and the pope's ban against the recruitment of troops on his lands, was still in L'Aquila on 22 August with only three thousand footsoldiers [505]. In quick succession, the Imperial troops reconquered Sarno (19 August), Nola (22 August) and Capua (28 August). To avoid being cut off from the League's camp, Giuliano and Bernardo Strozzi had to remove their companies from Pozzuoli – where they had been garrisoned since May – and head first to Aversa (23 August) and then to Capua (25 August), where they were forced to surrender to the Neapolitan Colonel Fabrizio Maramaldo [506] (1494-1555).

The situation of the League was deteriorating quickly also on the maritime front. Although Andrea Doria was as yet uncertain whether Charles V in Spain had accepted his terms and officially signed his *condotta*, he nevertheless cast his dice. On 20 August he entered the harbour of Gaeta with twelve galleys flying white flags, and obliged the League's forces to withdraw and raise the blockade. After relieving Gaeta, with a bold move *messer* Andrea took his squadron below the fortress of Ischia, which did not have a good harbour but could be used at least temporarily as a point of support, having sufficient artillery to force even a large squadron of galleys to come to a dangerous standstill. From Ischia, the Doria squadron ventured every day into the Gulf of Naples to skirmish with the enemy galleys, "cosa la quale era bella a vedere" [which was something beautiful to see], at least according to the Genoese historian and diplomat Giovanni Salvago, who was a direct witness of events [507]. Clearly, Andrea Doria had no desire to engage thirty-five Venetian and French galleys with his own twelve. Instead he wanted the League's naval forces in the Gulf to group and shift to a defensive mode; in this way they would be made to spend their little residual energy in protecting themselves, which would prevent them from re-establishing contact with the land forces and playing any further role in the final and decisive stage of the siege of Naples.

The letters sent on 23 August were the last the Ten would receive from their representa-

[503] Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., pp. 73v-74v; Santoro, *Dei successi*, cit., pp. 102-103; Rosso, *Historie*, cit., p. 45.

[504] Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, 31 August 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, Ambasciatori, Italia, 9, foliation is absent.

[505] The Ten to Bartolomeo Gualterotti, Florence, 29 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 45, ff. 56v-57r.

[506] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, p. 493.

[507] Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, ff. 37v-38r.

tives in the camp of the League. As the back lines of his army were collapsing and the Imperialists were reconquering the neighbouring towns one after another, the marquis of Saluzzo decided (too late) to reduce the defensive perimeter of the encampment and concentrate all the remaining troops and artillery in the main *alloggiamento* of Poggioreale. It was the beginning of the end. When on 27 August the Imperialists saw that the ordnance was being withdrawn from the League's positions in front of the fortress of San Martino and that the lack of horses and oxen was slowing down the operation, they realized that the moment had come to put the enemy under pressure and strike the decisive blow of the campaign. With a massive and carefully planned sortie, the Imperialist forces surrounded the League's *forte* on the hill of Capo di Monte, the one du Bellay called the *Fort de France* (or *de Gascogne*), cutting off from the main camp no less than eight hundred soldiers (consisting of Frenchmen, Gascons and Italians of the White Bands). It was a devastating blow that compromised the tactical situation of the besieging army and one that the severely weakened forces of the League were unable to counter. An attempt to relieve the *Fort* from Poggioreale failed miserably, and the Imperialists quickly consolidated their positions with trenches and earthworks. The siege of Naples was *de facto* over.

As if this were not bad enough, news of the fall of Capua (the cornerstone of the backlines of the League's army, as well as the place where many of its sick and wounded found shelter) had eventually reached the League's camp, causing widespread discontent among the troops and forcing the commander to immediately adopt a course of action that the loss of contact with the *Fort* had by now made inevitable. There was no time to wait for Renzo da Ceri's relief force. With Somma, Nola and Capua in enemy hands, the League's army had to abandon the siege of Naples immediately, before the only remaining road left open to its retreat, the road to Aversa, was blocked. The *Fort de France* could not be relieved, and its defenders, led by Charles de Coucy and the *baron* de Aigremont, were to be considered as good as lost.

Those who left the camp of Poggioreale on the night between Friday 28 and Saturday 29 August, were a pale shadow of the *bellissima gente* that scarcely four months earlier had marched on Naples, eager to divide the spoils of the *Regno*. Of an army that had probably numbered over thirty thousand combatants at the beginning of the siege, less than seven thousand soldiers were still able to walk, and even those were mostly broken men, half-starved, weakened by fevers, worn out by the fighting and deprived of sleep for days on end. Marching in silence, without the beat of drums, they were leaving everything behind: their comrades who were too ill to march, all of the French ordnance but five *falconetti* and five carts full of ammunition, and all luggage that could slow down or betray their furtive retreat. To the Imperialists who went there to loot a few hours later, the undefended *alloggiamento* of Poggioreale offered a rich booty and a distressing sight. Amid the impressive fortifications planned by the ingenious Pedro Navarro dead and dying soldiers lay everywhere. Most of the French cannons were still intact and in their emplacements; there were heaps of all sorts of weapons and equipment, plenty of ammunition, and "quel che era segno della perdita loro" [what was the sign of their defeat] (at least according to Paolo Giovio) richly-adorned pavilions in which grass had grown [508].

[508] Giovio, *La seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 78r.

While organizing the retreat of his remaining forces, the marquis of Saluzzo decided to draw them up according to the order of march adopted by armies at the time: that is, vanguard-battle-rearguard. The Piedmontese marquis's choice was a tactically 'orthodox' one, but the advisability of sticking, on all occasions, to the traditional tripartite division was being debated in military circles in those years [509]. Indeed in this specific case it turned out to be a catastrophic mistake, because the various parts of the army were too weak, and the soldiers of whom they were composed too exhausted and demoralized to resist for long the attack of even a small but resolute force. Later, even the Spaniards argued that, had the marquis arrayed his troops in a single, large body, they would have probably reached Aversa with minimal losses. For the soldiers of the League were not the only ones to keep watch in the dark: the light cavalry of Ferrante Gonzaga, "che in questa guerra è stato un Marte" [who in this war was a Mars] [510], had spent the night *in arme* in the open, outside Naples's walls, and while the Imperial infantry and men-at-arms were still readying themselves, the light horsemen dashed in pursuit of the enemy immediately after the news of the retreat of the League's army had reached them, at more or less 3 a.m. As he pointed out to his brother the marquis immediately after the fight in a letter that reeks with self-satisfaction, the young Mantuan *condottiere* considered himself personally responsible for the victory of the Imperial arms [511], and his claims, albeit excessive, were not entirely groundless.

Halfway from Aversa, Gonzaga and his light cavalrymen caught up with the enemy rearguard, a force of approximately 2,000 Landsknechts of the Black Bands under the command of *monsieur* de Pomperant. "Stracchi et desperati" [Exhausted and desperate], having not been paid for the last forty-five days, the Germans did not mount much of a resistance [512]; "in poco d'hora" [in a short time], the repeated attacks of the light horsemen against their flanks broke their *ordinanza*. Eventually, the Imperial light cavalry scattered the black-clad Landsknechts, took their flags, what was left of their luggage and let them be once they had dropped their weapons. For them, the war – that war, at least – was over. Gonzaga quickly resumed his pursuit and caught up with the enemy 'battle', under the command of Pedro Navarro. There the scene repeated itself, this time to the disadvantage of the Swiss and Gascons. After a brief resistance, the League's troops were overwhelmed and Navarro himself captured, along with the artillery and the carts full of ammunition that the fleeing soldiers were, with little enthusiasm, dragging towards Aversa.

Thirsty for glory, and sensing that total victory was at hand, the young Mantuan captain general of the Imperial light cavalry guided his men in pursuit of the vanguard of the League's army, which was led by the marquis of Saluzzo and made up of Italians, "cioè le Bande Nere" [that is, the Black Bands] and "altri italiani" [other Italians] – presumably what remained of the White Bands. It is generally held that, as Paolo Giovio wrote in his

[509] Della Rovere, *Discorsi militari*, cit., pp. 31v-32r.

[510] Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, 12 September 1528 , ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, Ambasciatori, Italia, 9, foliation is absent.

[511] Ferrante Gonzaga to the marquis of Mantua, Naples, 1 September 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, ff. 189r-190r.

[512] Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, 12 September 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Ambasciatori, Italia, 9, foliation is absent.

Istorie, the Florentine infantry and the Italians in French service repelled a first attack of the Imperial light horsemen with the intense fire of their arquebusery, but were unable to reload their weapons before their ranks were run down by a second decisive charge from Gonzaga's cavalrymen, and that eventually the rearguard of the League (Giovio erroneously considered both Bands to be part of the rearguard) was "messa in rotta et vilmente sbarattata" [routed and scattered in a cowardly manner] [513]. However, Ferrante Gonzaga, who was by no means a modest person, never ventured to claim such a prestigious trophy as the *riputatissime* Italian Black Bands. Rather, he was the first to admit that the soldiers of the League's vanguard marched "più serrati et con miglior ordine" [in a more united and more orderly way] than those of the rearguard and the 'battle', and that they were also "miglior gente" [better troops]. Contrary to what Giovio says, as the Imperial light horsemen closed in, the exhausted soldiers of the Black and White Bands, arrayed in a single squadron, did find the strength to close ranks and hold their ground against not just one, but several attacks from Ferrante's lancers. In fact, they succeeded in resisting until the Mantuan *condottiere* realized that he had gone too far from Naples – and too close to Aversa – with only a hundred and fifty horsemen left, and prudently called off the pursuit, contenting himself with having routed two out of three bodies of the enemy army with the assistance of only a few hundred light cavalrymen.

Slowly, what remained of the army of the marquis of Saluzzo – roughly 3,000 soldiers – reached the relative safety of Aversa's town walls; relative safety, however, because Aversa had not been prepared in any way to give shelter to so many soldiers, its walls were "molto vecchi... fiacchi e senza baloardi all'uso moderno" [very old... weak and without bastions in the modern way] [514], and by midday the bulk of the Imperial army was already arrayed outside the city. When they arrived the Spanish footsoldiers attempted an escalade, but were repelled by the defenders. Seeing this, the prince of Orange, who was determined to force the enemy to surrender unconditionally, ordered some of the cannons that had been captured in the abandoned camp of the League to be brought up to the walls of Aversa. At daybreak, on Sunday 30 August, undisturbed by the enemy, which was left without artillery, a battery consisting of two half-cannons and one saker started a furious cannonade that in a short time brought down large tracts of the city walls, and then pounded the built-up area of Aversa.

If the defenders were resolute enough to compensate for their vulnerability to artillery fire, old-style fortifications could become insuperable barriers even to armies with good artillery trains and plenty of ammunition. However, this was not to be the case of Aversa. As the shelling raged, the marquis of Saluzzo summoned the *consulta* urgently and all the captains assured him that their soldiers "non volevano combattere a patto alcuno" [did not want to fight at any cost] [515]. In Aversa there were no provisions and no artillery; the city itself was situated on a flat site hard to defend, and after the fall of Capua there was no hope of relief nor positions they could fall back on. Moreover, the population of Aversa was far more will-

[513] Giovio, *La seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 76v, and Santoro, *Dei Successi*, cit., pp. 110-121.

[514] Santoro, *Dei successi*, cit., pp. 113-114.

[515] Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, ambasciatori, Italia, 9, foliation is absent.

ing to pay a heavy tribute in money to the Imperialists in order to be spared the indignities and horrors of a sack, than one in blood for having given its support to the doomed resistance of the League's troops. Seeing no alternative, the marquis, who had been badly wounded in the knee by a shard at the beginning of the bombardment, agreed to send Count Guido Rangoni to parley with the prince in order to salvage whatever was possible. As the Imperial artillery continued to fire on Aversa, the Modenese *condottiere* tried to save at least the freedom of the *persone* [people] and the *insegne* [standards] of the defeated army, but Philibert de Châlons rejected his conditions and restated his request for a surrender at discretion. Even though Count Guido in turn rejected the draft of the accord as shameful and refused to be included in it, the marquis of Saluzzo eventually agreed to the terms dictated by the prince of Orange and put an end to the agony of the League's army – but not to the violence. Ignoring the orders of their commanders, who had agreed to levy a tribute on Aversa, the Spanish troops refused to be defrauded of their recompense and entered the now-undefended town, sacking it. According to some sources, when the Italian soldiers of the League who were in Aversa realized what was going on, they actually joined their former enemies in the looting, doing, even on that wretched occasion, more than their share [516]. It was an appropriate finale to a long and cruel summer of war.

According to the terms of the surrender, the marquis of Saluzzo, the prince of Navarre and Pedro Navarro were declared prisoners of the prince of Orange and could not be freed without the approval of the emperor. The marquis also agreed to return to the Imperialists all the cities, fortresses and castles of the Kingdom of Naples still in the hands of the troops of the *Cristianissimo*. All the units that were in Aversa were to give over their flags to the prince and disband, while all the soldiers, regardless of rank, nationality and speciality, had to surrender all their weapons, mounts, equipment and their things "di qual si voglia sorte et quantità siano" [of whatever sort or amount]; the French, German and Swiss soldiers were free to go home "senza altramente far testa né fermarse in loco alcuno" [without occupying any position or stopping in any place] [517], while the Italians first had to swear that, at least for the next six months, they would not serve against the emperor. Rather ironically, the surrounded contingent defending the fort on the hill of Capo di Monte, whose position had been judged untenable since the beginning, was the last unit of the League's army to give up its weapons. It surrendered to the prince of Orange a day after their comrades in Aversa, after valiantly repelling the attacks of the Spanish infantry led by Juan de Urbina, who hoped to take their *Fort* by storm.

Albeit dramatic, the events that took place at Aversa were a mere formality. At 8 p.m.the day before in Naples Girolamo Morone had already announced to the world the defeat of the League's army in a famous letter to Andrea Doria that started with a cry of unrestrained joy: "Vittoria, vittoria, vittoria!" [Victory, victory, victory!] [518].

[516] CO.DO.IN., cit., XXXVIII, pp. 524-527.

[517] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, p. 478.

[518] Girolamo Morone to Andrea Doria, Naples, 29 August 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 167r.

My observance of the rule that rhetorical flights of fancy have no place in a book of history has been sufficiently constant, I hope, to permit me a single, minor breach as we take leave of the Black Bands. Perhaps, at dawn, on 31 August, outside Aversa, a dozen frayed, worn-out black flags were thrown to the ground on a heap of other standards. For an instant, perhaps they even seemed to cover the entire pile completely in black. Then other flags were piled up on top of them and black became just one colour among the many others.

The lance of Giovanni de' Medici had been broken.

Conclusion

The Broken Lance

> "... *le Bande Nere, essendo morto il Conte Ugo... ed essi parte morti, parte presi e parte malati, si sbandarono di maniera, che quella milizia, la quale sola di questo nome in Italia a questi tempi era degna, mai più insieme non si rimesse*" [519].
>
> Benedetto Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*

The collapse of the League's forces around Naples was so sudden and complete that for days no one but the Imperialists knew what had happened to Lautrec's army. While their representatives in the camp maintained an increasingly worrying silence, the Ten received various contradictory versions of what had happened to the army of the League after its retreat from Naples. By 5 September, when a copy of Girolamo Morone's letter was intercepted, they could only hope that the defeat was not as total as it seemed. On 12 September, however, Captain Giuliano Strozzi gave the Ten a complete report, confirming the truth of the more extreme proclamations of the Imperial sources: "la impresa del Regno è rovinata in tucto, l'exercito è rotto, perdute le artiglierie, perdute le munitioni et ogni altra cosa" [the enterprise of the *Regno* is completely ruined, the army is routed and the artillery is lost as well as the munitions and everything else] [520].

So complete was the chaos to which the League's army fell victim in its final days, that the cases containing all the army's papers fell into Imperial hands, including the secret, and highly-compromising, correspondence between the French and the Neapolitan barons of the Angevin faction. These papers would play a major role in the implacable repression carried out in the Kingdom by the Viceroy Philibert de Châlons and in the preparation of the proceedings instituted by Girolamo Morone against many *baroni* in the months following the siege of Naples [521].

After a brief imprisonment, the marquis of Saluzzo, the prince of Navarre, Paolo Camillo Trivulzio, Lautrec's secretary Ambrogio da Fiorenza and the *seigneurs* of Aigremont and

[519] "...the Black Bands, with Count Ugo dead... and they in part dead, part captured and part sick, split up in such a way that that this unit, the only one at the time in Italy worthy of this name, never joined together again". Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I, p. 464.

[520] The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, Florence, 12 September 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarìe, 45, ff. 71v-72v.

[521] See Santoro, *Dei Successi*, cit., pp. 112-113, 125-138.

Pomperant died one after another, overcome by wounds, epidemics or sheer exhaustion. Pedro Navarro, "ammalato et vecchio" [ill and aged], was locked up in the Castel Nuovo, charged with treason and eventually sentenced to death by the emperor, though he died in his cell before the execution in suspicious circumstances. The pugnacious Giovambattista Soderini, who was wounded in the head and had lost three fingers [522], died of illness in Naples while arguing about his own ransom, which he judged excessive [523]. Marco del Nero, whom the Ferrarese representative in Naples defined as a "homo richissimo di contanti" [man very rich in cash], was taken prisoner on his litter and died shortly after agreeing to a ransom of twelve thousand *scudi* [524]. Count Ugo de' Pepoli had succumbed to his illness in Capua two days before the city opened its gates to the Italian soldiers of Fabrizio Maramaldo (28 August), some of whom broke into the church where the Bolognese *condottiere*'s funeral was being held and stripped his corpse of the precious necklace of golden seashells, the symbol of the French Order of St. Michel. Lautrec's body was disinterred by a Spanish footsoldier, who "se lo portò in collo per mezzo le turbe de' soldati e del popolo... spettacolo più di ogni altro in questa guerra fiero et abbominevole" [carried him on his shoulders through the crowds of soldiers and populace... a spectacle more savage and abominable than anything else in this war] and kept it in a cellar for a period, in the hope of extorting a good sum of money at least from the house of Foix. For some reason or other, however, nobody, neither friend nor foe, found the courage or decency to ransom the illustrious corpse [525]. Instead, Juan Pérez, a secretary of Charles V, found the whole thing rather ironic, for according to a popular rumour, Lautrec had died wondering how God could possibly let him depart this life before he could enter Naples, and the Almighty "cumpliole su deseo despuès de muerto" [fulfilled his desires after death] [526]. The bones of Lautrec remained where they were for years, until Consalvo de Cordova, namesake and nephew of the Grand Captain, buried them in his family tomb in Naples. The remains of count Louis de Lorraine-Vaudémont, commander of the Landsknechts of the Black Bands and Lautrec's second-in-command, were spared a similar indignity. The merciful *Clarisse* nuns of Naples ransomed his corpse and buried it in their church with all due honours and great pomp, in memory of all the benefits bestowed on them in the past by the house of Anjou, to whose rights over the throne of Naples the count had been the last heir.

The only high-ranking officer of the League's army to escape with both his life and his freedom was Count Guido Rangoni, who, after refusing to be included in the terms of the army's surrender, had shrewdly continued to cavil until he found a loophole and was set free, thanks also to the intervention of Ferrante Gonzaga.

Renzo da Ceri withdrew his relief force to l'Aquila and two thousand Tuscan footsoldiers, who were marching towards Naples, were hurriedly recalled to Florence. In the days that

[522] Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, cit., vol. I., p. 464.

[523] Giovio, *La Seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., p. 81r.

[524] Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, 12 September 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9, foliation is absent.

[525] Santoro, *Dei Successi*, cit., pp. 114-115.

[526] Juan Perez to Charles V, Naples, 8 September 1528, RAHM, CSC, ms. A-43, f. 163v.

preceded the collapse of the League's land forces, the French and Venetian galleys had been operating from the island of Procida, between Ischia and the mainland, trying (unsuccessfully) to lure the Doria squadron out of the protective shelter of the fortress of Ischia and make *messer* Andrea pay dearly for his *volte-face*. When news of the disaster of Aversa reached them, the naval forces of the League were left with no option but to abandon the Gulf of Naples as soon as possible and return to their respective bases. However, this was easier said than done. Combined, the French and Venetian squadrons constituted a force that the twelve Doria galleys would never dare attack, but admiral Barbisieux and *provveditore* Lando knew all too well that at the moment they parted, heading respectively towards Genoa (still in French hands) and Corfu, Andrea Doria would dash in pursuit of one of them. Wishing to gain as much lead as they could over the Genoese *condottiere* of the sea, Barbisieux and Lando agreed to leave Procida and the Gulf of Naples together and to part only after reaching the Ponziane Islands. As soon as the League's fleet was sighted from Ischia heading north, *messer* Andrea and his officers hurriedly left the "bancheti, balli et feste" [banquets, balls and feasts] with which the Imperialists were celebrating their victory, embarked on their galleys and set sail for Gaeta. The Genoese admiral, bent on freeing his native city from French rule, wanted to engage Barbisieux's squadron before he could reach Genoa. However, several accidents and other *fortune del mare* prevented his squadron from catching up with the French fleet, whose losses in the chase were limited to a galleon and another smaller sailship. But although the galleys of the Most Christian King all reached Genoa, control of the situation in the city was slipping out of the hands of governor Teodoro Trivulzio and anti-French feeling was spreading fast. Afraid of seeing his fleet bottled up in an unsafe harbour by the Doria squadron, *monsieur* de Barbisieux decided to go on to Savona, leaving Genoa almost undefended. On Saturday 12 September 1528, after the *genti* of his galleys had overwhelmed an almost nominal resistance and taken control of the city and after the few remaining French troops and the governor had withdrawn to the citadel, Andrea Doria harangued a crowd of Genoese citizens in the *piazza* Doria, proclaiming the restoration of Genoa's *libertà* [527]. In less than two weeks, first Naples and its Kingdom, then Genoa, "la puerta y llave de Italia" [the door and the key to Italy] [528], were lost to France – this time for more than a century.

On 31 August, less than five thousand half-dead men – "mai vidi le più sozze figure" [I never saw more disgusting figures], wrote the Ferrarese ambassador – many of them already "spogliati and svalisati" [stripped and robbed] by the Spaniards in contravention of the terms of the surrender, started a long march home. Given their state of prostration and the hostility of the *villani*, who were waiting along the roads, bent on revenge, it was clear that only a few of them would survive the journey [529]. The predictions of ambassador Naselli were confirmed by the account of another diplomat, who followed the same road as the soldiers of the League, though in the opposite direction (i.e. from Rome towards Naples): "di

[527] Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, cit., ff. 38v-41r.

[528] Lope de Soria to Mercurino di Gattinara, 17 June 1528, Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, Colección de Don Luis Salazar y Castro, ms. A-42, f. 425.

[529] Gerolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, Naples, 30 August 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9, foliation is absent.

5,000 furono acompagnati da spagnoli, non se trova che 200 siano gionti a Roma... et che niuno li vol fa una carità, sono morti per camino et da per tutto le strade ne sono piene di corpi morti, fin a Napoli, con un fetor intolerabile; et queli pochi son passati sono sta' spogliati da vilani etiam de la camisa, et solo se copreno con le foglie, che mai ho visto tanta crudeltà" [of the 5,000 accompanied by the Spaniards, only 200 arrived in Rome... and no one is charitable to them; they died on the road and everywhere there are dead bodies, right up to Naples, with an intolerable stench; and the few that passed have been stripped by the peasants even of their shirts and cover themselves only with leaves; I have never seen such cruelty] [530]. Blaise de Montluc walked all the way back to his native Gascogne, penniless, reduced to a state of destitution and with one arm in a sling that had barely avoided amputation (it would take him three years to regain its complete use). During his long march he had desired "la mort mille fois plus que la vie; car j'avois perdu tous mes Seigneurs et amis qui me cognoissoint" [death a thousand times more than life, because I had lost all the lords and friends who knew me] [531] – and to think that only a few months earlier Lautrec in person had granted him the rich Neapolitan barony of Torre Annunziata!

On the whole, Guido Rangoni estimated that of the seemingly insatiable host of seventy thousand "boche" [mouths] that had entered the Kingdom of Naples, only sixteen thousand survived. However, not all the soldiers of the disbanded League's army chose to make their way back to their dangerously distant countries of origin. The French, Gascon and even Swiss troops had little choice in that matter, but the situation of the surviving rank-and-file of the Black Bands and the other Italian units was a different one. To begin with, even though Giovanni's 'orphans' were eventually forced to surrender their flags, they had not lost them during the retreat, and when the Imperialists entered Aversa the Florentine troops were still grouped together, holding their weapons firmly in their hands – a fact that probably granted them some respite, during the chaotic moments following the signing of the League's surrender. Moreover, the terms only stated that the Italians could not serve *against* Charles V for the following six months. That victory at Naples had been a decisive victory, but also a very costly one, and with their forces reduced to less than ten thousand men the Imperial generals were looking for ways to quickly boost their army's strength. This left the now *sciolti* [disbanded] Italian rank-and-file with one acceptable alternative to the certain loss of all their possessions (their weapons and the few *robe* they were left with) and to a march towards death that they were supposed to begin the very day after the events of Aversa, without rest, without provisions and, in particular, without any real defence from the mobs of angry and greedy *villani* patrolling the roads. When their ex-captains and the other officers of the League saw them for the last time, many of the former soldiers of the Black Bands were enlisting in the Italian *colonnello* of the Neapolitan *condottiere* Fabrizio Maramaldo [532], who was in command of the only unit of Italian infantry

[530] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLIX, p. 15.

[531] Montluc, *Mémoires de Messire Blaise de Montluc*, cit., p. 89.

[532] Giovanni Borromei to the marquis of Mantua, Florence, 12 September 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Firenze, 1109, f. 546v; the Ten to Giuliano Sederini, Florence, 12 September 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 45, f. 72v.

left in the Imperial army. They would soon see Tuscany again, but this time as soldiers of the army that was to besiege Florence the following year.

Many of the remaining Landsknechts of the German Black Bands made a similar decision, swelling the ranks of their colleagues in Imperial service. The situation at Naples was very different from that of the bloody battlefield of Pavia, where in 1525 the Imperial Landsknechts of Georg Frundsberg had intentionally annihilated the first (and far more famous) Black Bands of the *Cristianissimo*. Contact between the two groups of Landsknechts had been fairly frequent, if we consider both the recurrent, secret *pratica de' Lanzi* and the vicissitudes of the siege of Naples, which included not only frequent skirmishes, but also repeated exchanges of prisoners and desertions of single soldiers or small groups from one side to the other. However, it is difficult in the end to assess which side (if any) profited most from this ambiguous situation. The point is that those in Imperial and in French service were not simply German infantrymen. They were above all Landsknechts. They followed different flags, but shared a similar lifestyle and code of conduct. In the aftermath of the disaster of Naples, and in the traditional (and ever popular) game of 'passing the blame' following every defeat, the scant resistance offered by the German Black Bands to Gonzaga's cavalry was often considered to have been the first cause of the collapse of the League's army. Indeed some even went as far as to accuse the black-clad Landsknechts of betrayal. According to that specialist in survival, Guido Rangoni, they had not even tried to stop the enemy and they had promptly joined the ranks of their 'accomplices' when they arrived [533]. Instead it is likely that the Imperialist Landsknechts agreed to protect their compatriots immediately after their surrender, and that when many of the latter decided to enter Imperial service, they did it in the proper way: in other words, according to the customs of war and of their 'pious order'. Their protection certainly did not extend to the surviving Swiss: virtually none of the four thousand Confederate mercenaries (mostly Bernese) who had accompanied Lautrec ever saw their Canton again.

The terms of the surrender allowed the captains of infantry, their lieutenants, all the men-at-arms and the light cavalrymen to retain at least one mount – provided that it was not a warhorse. Albeit *svalisati*, Giovanni Turrini, Giuliano Strozzi, Amico da Venafro, Tommaso Gotti, Tommasino Còrso and Pasquino returned to Florence, where the Ten promptly gave them *condotte a provisione*; while Giovambattista Gotti was appointed sergeant-major general of all the Florentine forces. Bernardo Strozzi, Barbarossa and Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto would fight for Florence during the siege of 1529-1530. As for Lucantonio Cuppano, he entered the service of the duke of Urbino. The fate of Braccio de' Pazzi, Angelo Bastardo, Belriguardo da Castiglione, Francesco Rustichello, Gian Moro and Gianni di Restino, however, is uncertain. Towards the end of the siege many letters from the League's camp were intercepted by the Imperialists, thus we do not know exactly how many of the captains of the Black Bands were still alive or in Florentine service at the moment the League's forces started their withdrawal from Naples. They were either dead or had decided not to serve the republic for the time being. The number of surviving captains who succeeded in reaching Florence is, however, of little importance: after Aversa the Black Bands were, *de facto*, dead. First the struggle between Florence and Orazio to gain

[533] See Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVIII, pp. 476 and 529.

control over the Bands, then the heavy losses inflicted during the siege of Naples, and finally the separation of the captains from the bulk of their most precious properties, their veteran soldiers, had wiped out or scattered an invaluable accumulation of tactical expertise.

Nevertheless, Florence would have been unlikely to have chosen to recreate anything resembling the Black Bands, even given the opportunity. Despite everything the republic had done and spent to acquire their services, and despite their outstanding accomplishments, the Black Bands remained a foreign body to the rest of the Florentine military organization and were far from being a potential model. Faithful to its policies, Florence maintained a 'fragmented' infantry and dealt with 'small' military entrepreneurs one by one, emphasising the pre-eminence of its own *commissarii*. Even the negotiations to create a *colonnello* of infantry under the command of Giovanfrancesco Gonzaga (?-1539), a nephew of *signor* Federico, failed because the Ten considered the big *condotte* awkward and dangerous and wished to reduce his command from one thousand to less than five hundred men [534]. On the whole it was fortunate for both Florence and the Black Bands that the former was too weak, financially and politically, to realize its projects to 'reform' the latter.

The dissolution of the League's army and the loss of the Black Bands were a tremendous blow for Florence. The republic had staked its best troops and much of its money on the policy of 'fighting for Milan in Naples', hoping that a French victory in the *Regno* would restore some sort of balance of power in the Italian peninsula and that the liberation of Francis I's two sons, hostages of the emperor, could be negotiated by their father from a position of strength. As long as the war against the Empire continued and its outcome remained uncertain, Florentine financial support and troops could have made a difference, but after the disaster of Naples, Florence soon ceased to be even a minor interlocutor and simply became goods for barter among the greater powers. In fact, it could be said that Florence really lost its freedom under the walls of faraway Naple; and not when the small relief force led by the *commissario* Francesco Ferrucci (himself a survivor of the Neapolitan expedition) tried to reach the besieged city and was annihilated after a furious struggle by the troops of the prince of Orange (who died in the engagement) at Gavinana, on the slopes of the nearby Pistoiese mountains, on 3 August 1530.

The veritable collapse of the pro-French party in Italy after the failure of the siege of Naples hastened the reconciliation between the pope and the emperor. Clement VII wanted the power of his family restored in Florence; Charles V wanted to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor; Francis I wanted his sons back. This process was favoured by the initial successes obtained by the small force of the League, led by Renzo da Ceri, which had landed in Apulia after the disaster of Naples [535]. When Saint-Pol and what remained of his army were defeated at Landriano sull'Olona [536] (21 June 1529), the League of Cognac was already, figuratively speaking, an empty shell. On 29 June Clement VII signed the treaty of

[534] The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, Florence, 16 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 127r. *Cagnino* remained *a provvigione* from July to November 1527.

[535] See Vitale, *L'impresa di Puglia degli anni 1528-1529*, cit.

[536] Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, cit., pp. 583-584.

Barcelona with Charles V, and when in August the so-called Peace of the Ladies between Francis I and the emperor was signed in Cambrai, France's Italian allies found themselves deserted by the Most Christian King (whose sons were freed by the emperor on 14 July 1530). Owing to its stubborn refusal to restore the Medici to power, the growing political isolation of the Florentine republic rapidly became an encirclement: an encirclement completed by the inclusion of the duke of Ferrara in the Defensive League of all Italian states but Florence (on December 1529). This time it was a League promoted by the emperor [537].

The duke of Ferrara's son, Ercole d'Este, who had just been appointed the new captain general of all Florentine forces, signed the *condotta* and cashed his *piatto*, but never went to Florence to take his place at the head of the troops he was supposed to raise. What the house of Este needed most at that time was Charles V's protection and goodwill, not Florence's friendship. The hopes the Ten had placed in the Ferrarese alliance were quickly dashed when it was clear that "considerazioni dello stato" [*raison d'état*] would prevail over Ercole's "fede" [given word] [538]. When, at the end of October 1529, Orange's dreaded 'devil's army' eventually arrived beneath the walls of Florence to commence a siege that would last almost twice as long as that of Naples, the republic would fight alone.

That, however, is another story.

[537] Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, cit., pp. 278-290; Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, cit., pp. 112-113, 119-121.

[538] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., vol. III, p. 2014.

Appendices

Appendix 1

The Pope's Devils: the Black Bands at the Defence of Frosinone (21 January - 4 February 1527)

"In questo li diavoli sempre cantavano, et se alcuno si monstrava, subito era morto d'archibuso..." [539].

Paolo Giovio describing the Black Bands at the defence of Frosinone

At the beginning of October 1526, little more than a month before being fatally wounded at Governolo (25 November), Giovanni de' Medici sent from Lombardy to Rome a *colonnello* consisting of 1,500 hand-picked soldiers divided into five companies under the command of Lucantonio Cuppano (1504–1560), one of his best and most trusted captains. The fact that Giovanni agreed to deprive himself of so many veterans (who, as soon as they heard of their master's death, assumed "il cognome delle bande nere" [the nickname Black Bands] [540]) at a very critical moment of the campaign in northern Italy is symptomatic of the dangerous situation in which Clement VII found himself. The pontiff was torn between the constant threat of the forces assembled by the powerful pro-Imperialist Colonna family (which had entered Rome itself in September, forcing the pope to withdraw from the League for four months) and that of an attack from the Kingdom of Naples. At the beginning of January 1527 the latter danger became a real one as the viceroy of Naples Charles de Lannoy (1482-1527) entered the State of the Church with an army made up of 12,000 footsoldiers, mostly feudal Neapolitan levies, reinforced by 5,000 infantrymen, some Spanish, some German [541].

After dropping the plan proposed by Vitello Vitelli of creating a line of defence close to Rome by dividing up the papal troops and stationing them at Velletri, Tivoli and Palestrina (thus abandoning completely the Ciociaria province), Renzo da Ceri (1475-1536), the new commander in chief of the papal forces, decided to adopt a more offensive strategy. As

[539] "While doing this the devils sang all the time, and if anyone showed himself he was immediately killed by arquebus fire...".

[540] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., vol. III, p. 1817.

[541] *Ibid.*, p. 1820; Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLIV, p. 103

Lannoy occupied the undefended town of Ciprano, *signor* Renzo started to concentrate all the available papal forces in Ferentino and, in order to gain time and slow down the enemy's advance, sent 1,800 infantrymen (that is, the whole *colonnello* of Cuppano and a few other companies of infantry in support) and three companies of light cavalry to garrison Frosinone [542].

The chief town of the Ciociaria was certainly not a place to send raw troops, and the objections that many papal officers had raised about the feasibility of defending it were well founded: Frosinone was situated at the top of a steep tuff hill, but it had no town walls at all and, because of the rocky soil, there was not even enough earth to build the most basic earthwork. Moreover, Frosinone had insufficient provisions and no artillery, while its main source of water in case of siege was a large well situated in a *borgo* [suburb] at the foot of the hill and vulnerable to enemy attack. Yet in da Ceri's plan, halting the Imperialist advance for a few days was of paramount importance and the papal commander knew that Lannoy could not advance further without taking Frosinone, because the town not only dominated the road to Rome but also controlled the southern bank of the river Cosa and the bridge over it.

From the start, the arrival of the 'orphans' of Giovanni de' Medici in the area was a nasty surprise for the Imperial troops, who until to that moment had met no opposition in their advance on Rome. As their *coronelia* [*colonnello*] (five companies, more or less one thousand men) approached Frosinone, two companies of Spanish infantry fell into an ambush prepared by three hundred soldiers of the Black Bands, who killed Colonel Peralta along with 80 Spaniards, took many prisoners and seized their two standards. Notwithstanding this mishap, on 21 December the viceroy's army arrived in sight of the town and, divided in two camps, laid siege to it. In anticipation of an assault, a battery made up of three half-cannons and four half-culverins started to cannonade the positions of the papal troops; in addition, since the tuff Frosinone was built on was very friable, the Spaniards secretly started to dig a mine.

The situation of the defenders of the town was difficult, but not desperate. The private houses lining the perimeter of Frosinone partly compensated for the absence of a town wall, and where there were openings the soldiers of the Black Bands built barricades. Because of the shortage of earth they used anything they could lay hands on: mostly wood taken from the roof structures of the houses themselves, but also the dead bodies of almost a hundred donkeys and a few buffalos. In their frantic hunt for anything that would strengthen the defences, the pope's soldiers also found an unexpected reason for rejoicing in the form of a large number of barrels of wine (about a thousand) that had been stored in Frosinone; these were duly requisitioned on the spot to be piled up on the barricades. Since this meant, sadly, that using them on the barricades meant that much of their contents had to be poured out, for the rest of the siege wine was easier to find than water and only the horses

[542] Paolo Giovio wrote a very long letter to one of his friends on the siege of Frosinone which could be rightly considered the foundation stone of the myth of the Black Bands According to Giovio the Black Bands actually volunteered to occupy such an advanced and exposed position, boasting that they would either defend it until relieved or would be able to withdraw in spite of the whole Imperial army; see Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLIV, pp. 99-105 and Giovio, *Lettere*, cit., vol. I, pp. 113-117.

of the light cavalrymen drank water. Even the bread dough of the papal troops was kneaded with wine. Although, as a general rule, Italian soldiers craved wine less than their German colleagues (on several occasions the Landsknechts had proved capable of making themselves *hors de combat* with drink), their thirst remained formidable, and it is more than likely that such an unexpected overabundance helped the 'devils' of the Black Bands to look on the bright side when they observed that only the fire of their arquebuses, a steep slope and a few barricades separated them from a vastly overwhelming force. To aggravate the Imperialists, the soldiers of the Black Bands displayed in full view of the enemy camp a *gatta* [female cat], the head of a buffalo and of a donkey (probably stuck on the points of three pikes) as an insult aimed respectively at the Spaniards, the followers of the Colonna and the Landsknechts [543].

The Imperialists, however, did not need to feel insulted to take the initiative. While their battery continued to fire on the houses and makeshift defences of Frosinone, the Landsknechts of the viceroy tried to deny the defenders access to their main source of water by storming the small cluster of houses where the well stood. The Germans spread easily into the *borgo*, but once there, they were caught in dense crossfire by the arquebusiers of the Black Bands, who shot at them from inside the houses, forcing them to withdraw. A subsequent attempt to occupy and hold the suburb launched by Spanish and Italian troops ended in another failure, and the Imperial *maestre de campo* Fernando de Alarcón (1466-1540) himself was shot in the leg. Eventually, the defenders decided to withdraw from the *borgo* and burn it down, but this did not put an end to the skirmishes with which both sides systematically tried to probe the enemy's intentions and wear down its resistance.

On 24 January the Imperial battery stopped its cannonade without having achieved any appreciable results, mostly because of the distance and the angle from which the cannons were forced to fire, owing to the prominent rise on which Frosinone lay. To make matters worse, after interrogating some Spanish prisoners captured during a skirmish, the papal soldiers found out about the mine being excavated under their feet and successfully countermined it [544]. Given the lack of a breach, the volume and remarkable accuracy of the fire of the Black Bands, and the fact that *signor* Giovanni's devils were steadfast and experienced veterans, the idea of an assault was rejected. Knowing that Lucantonio's soldiers were quickly running out of provisions and ammunition, Lannoy simply decided to tighten the blockade on Frosinone and wait.

In the meantime, by the end of January Renzo da Ceri had eventually amassed enough troops – 6,000 Italians, 2,000 Swiss, 300 lances of heavy cavalry and 700 light horsemen – to leave Ferentino and go to Frosinone to relieve the Black Bands and (if the chance arose)

[543] *Ibid.*, p. 115. The use of the *insulto della gatta* by besieged Italian troops is well documented. This kind of provocation usually included the constant shouting of abuse and the singing of offensive songs in which the defenders 'invited' the enemy to come and get the cat. Still today the Italian expression *volere la gatta* [to want the cat] means to look for trouble.

[544] Giovio, who had a taste for gruesome details and, notwithstanding his pro-Imperialist leanings, passionately hated the Spaniards (his hometown of Como had been brutally sacked by the marquis of Pescara's troops in 1521), in his account of the defence of Frosinone gave lingering descriptions of the various slaughters of Spaniards perpetrated by the Italian *diavoli* and explained how, with remarkable success, the Black Bands 'interrogated' their Spanish prisoners with the aid of the lighted ends of the arquebus match-cords; *Ibid.*

fight a pitched battle with the viceroy's army. On 1 February the Imperial envoy in Rome Cesare Fieramosca (Charles V's advisor and squire and brother of the more famous Ettore Fieramosca, the hero of the Challenge of Barletta [545]) arrived in Ferentino on his way to Frosinone to inform the viceroy of the eight-day truce signed by Clement VII (which came into force on 1 February) only to find the papal troops had just left the town. Immediately the Neapolitan noble asked the papal legate to comply with the terms of the truce and recall his forces, but all the legate did in fact was to send a secret message to Renzo da Ceri ordering the *condottiere* to continue his advance.

On 2 February, as the papal army marched out of the woods in battle order, it was sighted by both the Imperialists and the defenders of Frosinone. To avoid the risk of being caught with a dispersed force between two fires (the town and da Ceri's relief army) Lannoy ordered his men to withdraw from their *alloggiamenti* and group on a hill south-east of Frosinone, where he established his new camp, while he sent 1,500 men – four companies of Landsknechts accompanied probably by a detachment of Spanish arquebusiers – to guard the bridge.

The papal elite shock-troops, the Swiss, led by Stefano Colonna, commander of Renzo da Ceri's vanguard, marched across the narrow bridge and, backed by heavy arquebus fire (probably from Italian troops), engaged the Landsknechts in a bloody 'push of pike'. As always when German and Swiss troops were involved, the mêlée was particularly violent, and when their formation eventually collapsed, the fleeing Landsknechts were long pursued by the Swiss who mercilessly hacked them to pieces with their halberds. Eventually more than three hundred Imperialists lay dead, four hundred had been captured, the bridge was in control of Stefano Colonna's troops and the way to Frosinone was open. Almost at the same time, the Black Bands made a sortie and vigorously attacked the viceroy's new camp, causing little harm but provoking considerable alarm. By sunset, Renzo da Ceri and his army had occupied the camp between Frosinone and the river Cosa which had been abandoned by the Imperialists. The road to Rome was once again open, and the siege was officially over.

After such a brilliant – and relatively cheap – success, the litigious papal commanders started to weigh up the pros and cons of pushing their good luck and attacking the viceroy's camp. A direct assault against an entrenched camp was always a hazard, but the quality of the Habsburg forces, as well as their morale, was decidedly lower than the pope's. However, Lannoy decided not to wait for his opponents to make up their minds. He had invaded the Papal States with a largely makeshift host, not to engage and defeat the papal army but to put Clement VII under pressure and force him to come to terms with Charles V. After this plan failed, he decided simply to disengage and return to Naples to prepare the restless *Regno* for a possible counter-offensive of the papal forces. On 4 February, two hours before dawn, Lannoy's army broke camp in complete silence and headed hastily towards Ciprano.

Given the proximity of the two camps, the Imperialists' nocturnal preparations for departure did not pass unnoticed. The papal commanders decided to pursue the withdrawing army with their main body, trying not to lose contact with the viceroy's rearguard, while a

[545] G. Procacci, *La disfida di Barletta: tra storia e romanzo*, Milan, Mondadori, 2001.

force made up of five hundred light horsemen and three hundred arquebusiers was to overtake the Imperialists on the march and attack their vanguard (believed to be the weakest section of Lannoy's host at that moment), throwing it into disorder and cutting off the enemy's retreat. Unfortunately, the flying column left the camp of Frosinone only at dawn, when it was too late, and in the end the viceroy's army succeeded in reaching Ciprano relatively undisturbed, leaving only 26 carts of its baggage train in enemy hands.

Although the opportunity to annihilate the entire force under Lannoy's command had come to nothing, the pope and his generals had several reasons to feel satisfied: Rome was no longer in check, Lannoy's army was quickly melting away (the Neapolitan feudal levies were deserting en masse), the Colonna were left alone and Clement VII was now free to give his support to the League of Cognac. A few days after the events of Frosinone had taken place the papal courtier and historian Paolo Giovio, who was always easily carried away, affirmed that after the brilliant success of Frosinone Italian footsoldiers had earned such a reputation that they could no longer be overawed by other *nationi*. Already when Clement VII had personally inspected them, wrote Giovio to one of his friends, the pope's Italian troops – and especially the 'devils' (i.e. the Black Bands) – had looked like "8,000 morti" [8,000 ghosts] (in the sense that they had a sort of otherworldly appearance) and had stirred up great expectations among those present. Captain Lucantonio, in particular, "in abito di Patroclo" [in the guise of Patroclus] with a golden flask (containing gunpowder) and a gilded arquebus, had displayed an appearance "da far saltare Venere fora del bagno e Volcano fora di fucina" [that would make Venus jump out of her bathtub and Vulcan out of his forge] [546].

The subsequent campaign launched by the French and papal forces against the Kingdom of Naples by sea and by land turned out to be both expensive and inconclusive and, feeling betrayed by the king of France, who had not sent the massive army his Italian allies were expecting, the pope decided to sign a truce with Lannoy. Immediately afterwards, believing that the viceroy would be able to stop the advance of the duke of Bourbon, Clement VII rashly decided to save money by disbanding many of his military forces. Although this was not exactly what happened in the case of the Black Bands, when the *diavoli* demanded the payment of wages owed, the pope ignored their claims, following (according to Cellini) the imprudent advice of Jacopo Salviati [547]. This seem to have caused the partial disbandment of Lucantonio's command. By the time the army of the duke of Bourbon, now a mutinous mob of German, Spanish and Italian soldiers, entered the papal state, Clement VII found himself almost without any defence.

What remained of the five companies of the Black Bands took part in the defence of Rome and helped to repel the first assault of the Imperialists. Eventually, however, Lucantonio's arquebusiers were overwhelmed and massacred at the end of a furious mêlée with the enemy, while their commander, who "combattendo con una sconcia ferita, dimostrò che pure in lui s'era trasferito lo spirto di chi lo allevò" [fighting with a ghastly wound, showed that the spirit of the man who had nurtured him had been transferred into him too] [548],

[546] Giovio, *Lettere*, cit., vol. I, p. 116

[547] Cellini, *Vita*, cit., p. 139.

[548] Aretino, *Lettere*, cit., vol. I, p. 469.

somehow managed to surrender to Luigi Gonzaga (1500-1532), a man also known as *Rodomonte* for his amazing physical strength. It is worth mentioning that according to some of the first reports on the sack, the way to the Imperialist onslaught was actually opened by former soldiers of the Black Bands who had left Rome disgruntled and penniless and spontaneously joined the troops of the duke of Bourbon [549].

[549] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLV, pp. 144, 167, 187, 202.

Appendix 2

The Wars at Sea I: a General Overview

"Ognium sa che la navigatione delle navi è tutta differente da quella delle galee..." [550].

Andrea Doria to Philip II, 19 June 1560

Until relatively recent times, the maritime side of the Italian Wars was a long neglected topic. The main reason for such a protracted lack of interest was the fact that much of the intense naval activity during the Wars took place at levels and in forms considered unworthy of investigation by military and naval historians. It is undeniable that, especially after the Kingdom of Naples fell into Spanish hands in 1503, most of the campaigns and great battles of the Italian Wars were fought well within the northern Italian mainland, and apparently far enough from the coastlines to make the contribution of the fleets secondary, or even irrelevant to the years of almost relentless campaigning on land, with no great decisive naval battles between the powers involved. However, given the length of the conflict and Italy's peninsularity, and given the fact that by the end of the Wars many of the major contestants could deploy considerable fleets and that one of them (Venice) had been a major sea power since its beginning, such a striking lacuna has seldom been examined within an appropriate context. In fact, the remarkable achievements of sixteenth-century *condottieri* of the sea have been frequently belittled or misinterpreted because they did not seem to follow a consistent or 'proper' strategic pattern. In other words, they did not appear to be carrying out fundamental tasks of modern-day naval powers, such as finding, engaging and destroying the enemy fleet, or demonstrating an ability to exercise a real control over the sea or effectively enforcing long-range blockades against enemy ports [551]. However, as has been pointed out by John Guilmartin, Mediterranean naval warfare was amphibious in nature, and the strategic, tactical and logistical assumptions that governed it were radically different from those that governed the conflicts fought by fleets of broadside sailing ships in the *Mar Oceano* [552].

[550] "Everyone knows that the navigation of sailships is completely different from that of galleys..." Andrea Doria to Philip II, Genoa, 19 June 1560, Archivo General de Simancas, Estado 1389, f. 71.

[551] On the origins of the 'Mahanian' doctrine on sea power and maritime predominance, see P.A. Crowl, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: the Naval Historian* in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, edited by P. Paret, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 444-477

[552] For my considerations on the role played by early modern galley warfare in the last phase of the Italian Wars I am

While sailing ships depended on winds, galleys, given their logistical and technical limitations, depended on coasts and harbours. Being unable to navigate for more than a few days without stopping to take on water and food, galleys could not control the sea or enforce blockades in the 'Mahanian' sense. But what they could do was to control the coastline and, above all, the harbours and their facilities. Typical duties of galley fleets were shipping troops and supplies to where they were needed, preventing the enemy from doing the same and, in concert with the land armies, covering the maritime side of their advances and operations. Direct confrontations between squadrons or even large fleets of galleys were considered neither necessary nor worthwhile. Battles were at best costly and dangerous affairs, and their uncertain outcomes would have no decisive effect on the progress of the war at sea or on land.

To these limitations we should add the fact that until the introduction of gunpowder technology in the second half of the fifteenth century, boarding remained the only viable tactic to overcome an opponent. Therefore the offensive potential of the galleys and the other smaller oared vessels (such as galiots, *fuste*, *brigantini* and *fregate*, in descending order) consisted mostly in the number of the combatants they could 'field'. This made the *galee grosse* – military versions of the large *galee da mercato* [553] – the central element of the galley fleets, and limited their effectiveness against both big roundships like the carracks (which often proved to be virtually invulnerable to the attacks of galleys) and coastal fortified strongholds. This state of affairs was radically changed by the appearance and relatively quick spread of effective centre-line bow artillery capable of smashing hulls (and walls, if disembarked), which drastically increased the offensive capabilities of the galley, making it a much more effective predator (Figure 17).

The placement of the pieces on a *galea* and their calibre were dictated by the long and narrow shape of the vessel. In fact it mirrored what had always been the distribution of the offensive and defensive potential on a galley since the times of the classical triremes. The main battery was set in the bow, where most of the galley's fighting potential was concentrated, while the platform built upon the stern, which housed the command, steering and signalling functions, and the long central section (with the benches of the rowers all placed diagonally on a single level) were the galley's vulnerable parts. Provided that it had the chance – that is, unless it had been somehow outmanoeuvred or simply outnumbered – a galley always attacked and faced attacks with its bow turned towards the enemy ship. By increasing their frontal destructive capabilities, cannons emphasised, so to speak, the traditional strengths and weaknesses of oared war vessels. As a result of these changes, by the 1520s the *galee grosse*, whose size had become a problem rather than an advantage, were replaced by the smaller *galee sottili*, which for almost a century offered the optimal combination of speed under oars, seaworthiness, agility, firepower and manpower.

greatly indebted to the works of John F. Guilmartin, in particular *Gunpowder and Galleys; Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare in the Sixteenth Century*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1974, and *Galleons and Galleys*, London, Cassell, 2002, and to F.F. Olesa Muñido, *La organizacion naval de los estados Mediterraneos y en especial de España durante los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid, Editorial Naval, 1969.

[553] On the heyday of the great *da mercato* galleys and the history of the brief season of Florence as a sea power, see M.E. Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys in the fifteenth century*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967.

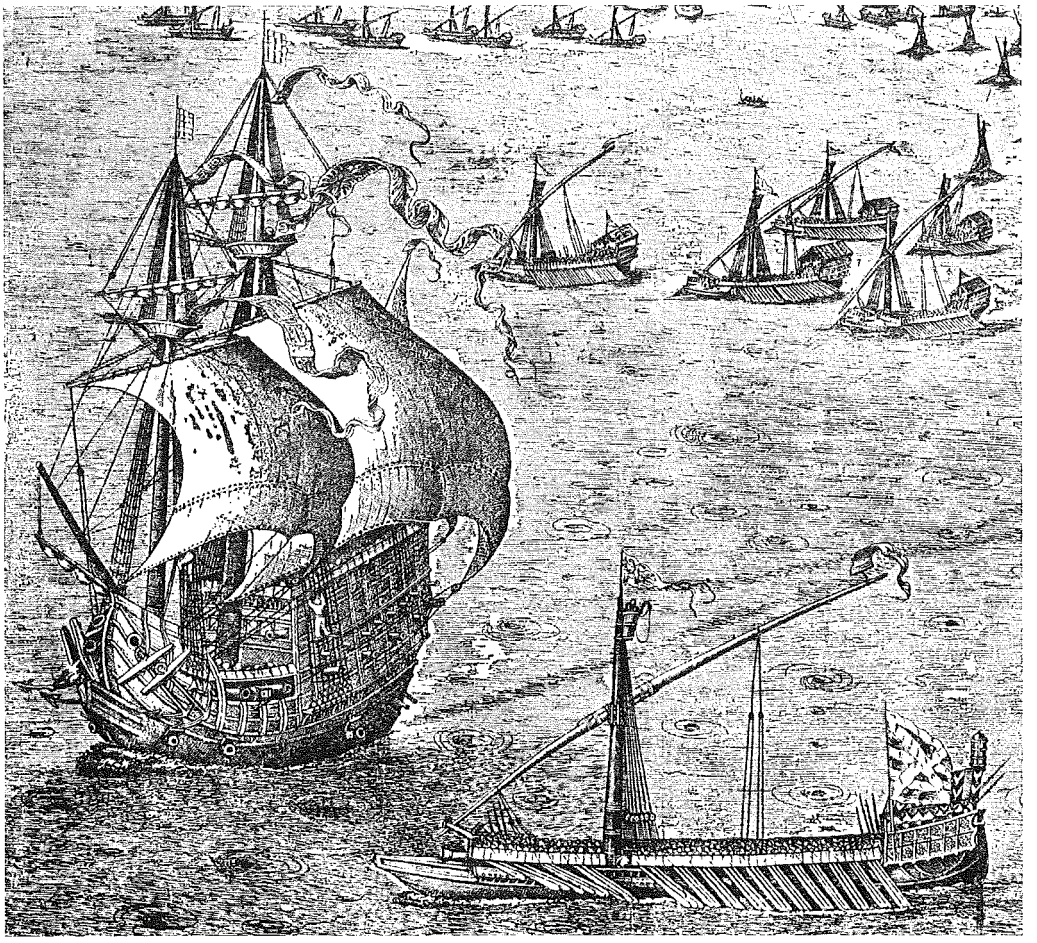


Figure 17
Peter Bruegel the Elder, *Naval Battle* (detail), 1561 (Private Collection).
In this engraving, showing an engagement between Spanish war galleys and Turkish carracks off the harbour of Messina, one can see clearly the structure and armament of the war galleys, and their differences with respect to those of the sailing ships.

The early modern *galea sottile* was basically a one-masted slender oared vessel, low in the water, with a very shallow draught and large lateen (triangular) sails. A standard form of galley never existed in practice, and this is not the right place to attempt a categorization of its various classes and sub-classes, but it ought to be noted that, with the exception of the Venetian galleys (which displayed many characteristics typical of the eastern type) [554], the type of galley referred to in this book is the western variety of *galea sottile*. Excluding the iron-tipped spur (5-6 meters) protruding from the bow, the rowing frame and the other

[554] On the different technical characteristics and tactical roles of the galleys of the various Mediterranean powers, see Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys*, cit., pp. 212-219.

platforms built on it, the hull of a 'thin' galley was about forty meters long and five-meters wide. The length/width ratio of a galley varied according to its size, from the 8:1 of an average *sottile* up to the 6:1 of the larger versions. The number of thwarts on each side varied considerably, but usually did not exceed twenty-four. During the first half of the sixteenth century the oarsmen of the *galee sottili* usually rowed *a terzarolo*: that is, sitting three to a bench and pulling individual oars of different lengths. The number of rowing benches was usually higher (up to thirty) in the case of the longer *galea bastarda*, combining elements of the thin galley and the *galea grossa*.

It is worth remarking that, whatever their class, the war galleys of the Italian Wars were light compared to their equivalents in the second half of the sixteenth century – those that fought at the battle of Lepanto, for example. The price revolution and the resulting rise in the salaries of the free oarsmen prompted the adoption of the more flexible *a scaloccio* rowing system (with five men or even more sitting on the same bench and pulling a single large oar). Despite a noticeable decrease in rowing efficiency compared with the *a terzarolo* style, this reduced the need for trained free oarsmen and allowed the construction of larger and more heavily equipped and manned vessels [555]. Still, at the resumption of the Italian Wars in 1521, long before the effects of the price revolution started to weigh heavily on the costs of maintenance, the equipping of *galee*, galiots and other types of oared raiding vessels still represented a lucrative investment for a *condottiere* of the sea.

The number of men crammed onto the long, narrow deck of a *galea* to face the fortunes of war (and the often far more destructive fortunes of the sea) could vary considerably. It could depend on purely contingent reasons, the tactical role and technical characteristics of the craft or the articles of the *condotta* stipulated by its commander (who was often, but not always, its owner as well) – not to mention his personal preferences and resources. In fact, there is little detailed information about the crews of galleys in the first decades of the sixteenth century.

The rowing gang of an average *a terzarolo* thin galley at the end of the 1520s could amount to about 140-150 men. Renaissance *galee* were usually rowed by a combination of free salaried oarsmen (the so-called *buonevoglie*), convicted *forzati* and slaves. The proportions of these categories on the rowing benches of the galleys of a naval power changed according to the fleet's strategic function and, above all, the sources of manpower it could count on. Venice, for instance, preferred to use *buonevoglie* and, thanks to her *Impero da mar*, was able to pursue this policy well into the sixteenth century. France, Spain and Genoa, on the other hand, already relied heavily on *forzati* and slaves at the beginning of the century. A high number of free oarsmen not only considerably enhanced the effectiveness of the *a terzarolo* rowing system, which required the presence of a substantial percentage of professional rowers to coordinate the stroke, but it also limited the number of combatants it was profitable to keep on a galley at any time (because the *buonevoglie* could join the fight if needed), and it avoided the need for constant surveillance. In exceptional circumstances, if defeat entailed a worsening of their already miserable conditions, even *forzati* and slaves

[555] For a short summary of the circumstances that brought about the crucial transition from the *a terzarolo* to the *a scaloccio* rowing system and its consequences, *ibid.*, pp. 118-125.

of different *nationi* or confessions could be persuaded to join the fight, generally in exchange for freedom.

The rest of the basic crew of a galley was made up of sailors (at least some 30-40 of them), the commander and his staff – generally supplemented by a band of young *nobili* who, like the *lancie spezzate* of the *condottieri* of the land, were at the same time apprentice officers and elite fighters – and a relatively small but essential group of technical experts (pilot, gunners, carpenters, surgeons...) and their attendants. The size and composition of the specialized fighting complement embarked on a galley was the crew's main variable, since it was almost always (except when a battle or landing operation was expected) linked to the quantity – and quality – of the other combatants of the ship, a category that included practically all those who were not actually chained to a rowing bench, from the *buonevoglie* to the sailors and the *nobili*.

In a boarding fight seamen and infantrymen with specific training in naval combat were far more effective than embarked land troops, but the latter were generally easier to find in large numbers at short notice and more easily replaced in case of defeat. In his advice to Charles V of Habsburg, written in 1539 in the aftermath of the catastrophic Christian defeat of Prevesa, Antonio Doria (1495-1577), a relative of the more famous Andrea Doria (1469-1560) and a reputable *condottiere* of the sea in his own right, considered as "ben provista da combattere" [well provided for combat] a galley that carried sixty sailors and at least one hundred soldiers [556] (mostly arquebusiers), though their number could be even higher. On the eve of the bloody naval battle of Capo d'Orso (1528), for instance, the six war galleys and other smaller vessels that made up the squadron of Naples embarked some seven hundred Spanish and German veteran infantrymen (see Appendix 6).

As in skirmishes and assaults on land, in boarding fights men did not fight as part of rigid formations; the required qualities were agility, aggressiveness and familiarity with the vessel itself. A shipboard fight took place on a swaying and uneven battlefield that combined insurmountable (that is, unless one fell overboard) obstacles and the space restrictions imposed by a very narrow deck with a very high density of combatants. The long and cumbersome pike was practically impossible to wield in a shipboard fight, so sailors and soldiers had to rely on various types of shorter *arme in asta*, such as half-pikes, halberds and partisans, and on the swords that most of them carried, either as a backup weapon or as a main one in combination with a *rotella*. Even though the crossbow remained in active service well into the sixteenth century, by the end of the 1520s the matchlock arquebus had in fact already replaced it as the main individual shipboard missile weapon – at least on Christian galleys. The Genoese and Spanish galleys that fought at Capo d'Orso in 1528 literally bristled with arquebusiers. The list of individual missile weapons commonly used in Mediterranean naval warfare was completed by a variety of rudimentary explosive and incendiary devices, by different kinds of short throwing polearms, and, last but not least, by the heavy stones that were dropped with deadly effect on enemies who thronged the deck below by seamen positioned, during the battle, on a galley's maintop and lateen yards.

[556] V. Borghesi, *Discorso dell'Illustrissimo signor Antonio Doria sopra le cose turchesche per via di mare (1539)*, in *Navalia; Archeologia e Storia*, edited by S. Ciciliot, Savona, 2000, pp. 117-137.

As far as the *arme defensive* [defensive equipment] were concerned, on Christian war galleys it was possible to observe an almost complete range of possibilities, from their total absence in the case of the average seaman or *buonavoglia*, who fought wearing only his breeches and a *berretta* [beret], to the *da piede* corselets worn by commanding officers and the teams of assault troops that spearheaded and supported the action of the boarding and counter-boarding parties. Of all the *nationi* involved in the 1526-1528 naval campaigns, the Spanish in particular seem to have made a fairly generous use of various types of 'white' armour for their embarked troops, including the arquebusiers. Instead, the fighting complements of the galleys of Venice and Genoa that made up the strength of the anti-Imperialist naval forces were both principally composed of lightly armoured specialists recruited mostly in the lands of the *Serenissima*'s *Impero da mar* and in the Ligurian *riviere*. In particular, contemporary chroniclers were intrigued by the stark contrast of the struggle between the *armati* [armoured] Spanish embarked soldiers and their more direct opponents in the Tyrrhenian sea: i.e. the *desarmati* [unarmoured], agile Ligurian fighting men of the galleys of Andrea Doria, who fought almost naked but, as the Genoese historian Salvago put it, were "pratichi ne lo esercitio maritimo" [skilled in maritime operations] [557].

Far from being the direct cause of the decline of Mediterranean galley warfare, as has been frequently inferred in the past, effective heavy ordnance was integrated remarkably early and with considerable success. Very little information survives on the quantity and typology of artillery effectively carried by ordinary galleys during the first thirty years of the Italian Wars, but it seems that by the end of the 1520s a fairly common solution was to equip a galley with a main centreline gun flanked by at least one pair of lighter pieces. The prow of the flagship of Filippino Doria (?-1531), presumably the best equipped galley of the Doria squadron, was armed in 1528 with a centreline *basilisco* (probably a long bronze full cannon which threw iron balls of approximately 20 kg), two half-cannons, two *sacri* and two *falconetti* [558]. In addition to the main battery, the stern, the sides and the bow of a war galley sometimes also housed a variable number of small-calibre swivel guns like *moschette*.

Even though the skilfulness of naval gunners was generally considered to be superior to that of their land colleagues, the poor accuracy and low rate of fire of sixteenth-century ordnance usually meant that during an engagement between two galleys there was only time for a single exchange of volleys at a very close range, while each ship rushed forward trying to gain an angle of attack that would maximize the effects of the discharge of its own bow guns, and at the same time minimize the damage caused by the enemy's. The objective was not to sink the enemy vessel (a rare occurrence), but to gain some advantage in the boarding and ensuing violent mêlée that would eventually decide the outcome of the battle. Even when the results of these initial volleys were spectacularly devastating and bloody they were rarely decisive, and in some cases it made better sense to renounce the penetration power of iron or stone cannonballs and load the main guns *a mitraglia* [with scatter shots], because the target was not the ship itself, but the people that thronged its deck. Even the long spurs mounted on the prows of early modern galleys were designed not

[557] G. Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, ms. in Archivio Doria, at the Faculty of Economics and Commerce of the University of Genoa, scat. 417, n. 1912, f. 34r.

[558] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVI, pp. 666-667. Cf. with Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys*, cit., pp. 295-303.

to pierce the hull of an enemy vessel and compromise its seaworthiness, but rather to smash the fighting and rowing structures which were built upon it, lock the two ships and provide the boarding parties with a breach and a bridge to reach it.

Another major consequence of the increased need to protect the highly-vulnerable sides and sterns of the galleys from the fire of the bow batteries was the adoption of a battle array that was much more rigid and 'close' than in the past. During engagements between squadrons, galleys laboriously formed a thin and close-knit line-abreast with the prows facing the enemy and advanced slowly, following a pace and a course of attack set by the *galea capitana* (the flagship, usually positioned in the middle of the line) and keeping to a minimum any adjustments and changes of direction that might easily disrupt the battle array. Every galley protected the sides of its neighbours, and ships and squadrons caught astray in dispersed order were easy preys, while an overextended or broken formation offered the enemy the chance to slip some of its vessels through and crush the squadron, one galley after another. After two lines-abreast had collided and boarding fights had begun, it was almost impossible for galleys to disengage from combat, and defeat therefore entailed the loss, by capture or sinking, of most of the force committed to battle.

In small galley actions and naval operations of relatively limited size, like most of those that took place during the Italian Wars, the outcome of a possible fight was usually easy to foresee. In fact, unless the surprise was total, it was difficult to force a group of galleys to a general engagement when the odds were clearly against them. Moreover, naval combat in the Mediterranean was almost always a means and not an end. The preservation of the ships, their precious manpower and the harbour facilities was of paramount importance, whereas the advantages that could ensue from control of the sea (as we mean it today) after the destruction of an enemy fleet were negligible. During the first thirty years of the conflict the capture and loss of *galee* and *navi* were in fact fairly frequent, whereas the occasions on which two commanders led their forces out of their respective bases with the intention of engaging and destroying the enemy squadron were very rare, almost unique. At Capo d'Orso (Appendix 6), the reasons that drove the Imperial lieutenant of Naples Don Hugo de Moncada to risk all of his naval forces in a single and dangerous gamble (which he lost) against a numerically superior enemy were, as we shall see, political rather than military.

During the Italian Wars the Adriatic sea remained substantially a Venetian lake. By the resumption of the hostilities in 1521 the *Serenissima* had recovered, after a long and difficult *reconquista*, most of the *terraferma* possessions lost in the aftermath of the catastrophic defeat of Agnadello (1509), with the important exception of some coastal cities of Romagna and, above all, the Apulian harbours of Brindisi, Bari and Otranto. However, the republic still controlled the Istrian peninsula, most of the indented Dalmatian coastline and the important naval base on the Greek island of Corfu, at the mouth of the Adriatic sea. On several occasions between 1509 and 1517, dangerous land attacks were launched against the very heart of the Venetian state, by France, Empire, Spain and Milan in turn, but the only power that posed a direct threat to the *Serenissima* republic by sea remained the Ottoman Empire. Control over the Adriatic sea was of primary importance only for Venice, for its defence and for the maintenance of its commercial and territorial interests in the Eastern Mediterranean (the Venetian *impero da Mar*). The Italian Wars at sea were

fought mostly in the Tyrrhenian and Ligurian seas: the control of harbours and stretches of the Tyrrhenian coastline had been of particular importance for France and Spain throughout the first phase of the conflict, during which the armies of the houses of Valois and Aragon disputed the succession of the Kingdom of Naples.

Appendix 3

The Incursion against Monterotondo and the Sack of Montefalco

"Vostre Signorie hanno a chonosciere non hanno buttato via i loro denari" [559].

Florentine paymaster Marcello Strozzi
on the Black Bands

Between 12 and 22 October 1527, after months of inactivity, the entire army of the League in Umbria moved southwards to take possession of what were to become its winter quarters and, at the same time, to launch an incursion against the Imperial light cavalry garrisoned in Monterotondo, a town dangerously near Rome itself. The duke of Urbino used information provided by the pro-French Orsini and their partisans to devise a bold plan that, if successful, would have left the Spanish cavalry trapped in a *cul-de-sac* at the convergence of the rivers Aniene and Tiber, ready to be destroyed by a surprise attack from the remaining cavalry forces of the League and a hand-picked contingent of its infantry. At the beginning the florentine commissario Lorenzo Martelli refused to be involved in such an hazardous plan, but eventually he was obliged to give his agreement. For this undertaking the *commissario* initially offered the Mantuan heavy cavalry and 500, then 800, of his infantry troops, but in the end he was forced to commit himself to sending a thousand [560].

Between Foligno, the starting point of the incursion, and Monterotondo there lay a distance of approximately 65 miles, which the duke expected to cover in three stages. The situation of the Black Bands at that particular moment was as follows: the companies of Lucantonio da Montefalco and Giannetto Albanese were besieging the castle of Le Presse, where Rodolfo da Varano and his wife had taken refuge after being expelled from Camerino by the pro-Imperialist Sciarra Colonna; Pasquino, Amico, Scipione, Morgante and Giovanni Turrini were being posted to Monterotondo; and the remaining companies, together with the Venetians, were marching towards Montefalco to take possession of their winter quarters.

The plan of the duke of Urbino was simple: the Imperialists could not know that the League's camp had moved nearer to their positions, and they were not expecting an attack on Monterotondo, where the main body of the Imperial light cavalry (one of their great assets) was quartered, and around which surveillance was reduced. By leaving the train

[559] "Your Lordships must realize that you have not thrown away your money".

[560] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 12 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 235r.

behind, moving at the infantry's full speed and bringing food for three days only, the League's strike force could either take the elusive Imperial light cavalry by surprise or, at the very least, force it to a devastating confrontation. It was probably the last opportunity the duke had to accomplish this before the arrival of winter.

While the rest of the League's army went to occupy its winter quarters, the duke, the marquis of Saluzzo and Federico da Bozzolo, with all the Mantuan, Venetian and French men-at-arms, the Venetian mounted crossbowmen and stradiots, supported by one thousand Venetian foot, eleven hundred men of the Black Bands and between five and six hundred Swiss in French service, were heading towards Monterotondo with forced marches [561].

Marcello Strozzi, the Florentine paymaster to whom Lorenzo Martelli had entrusted the five companies that were part of the strike force, never tired of praising the Black Bands and their captains in his report to the Ten: in two days the eleven hundred soldiers had covered 56 Roman miles (1 Roman mile being more or less 1.48 km), resting for 3-4 hours only, waded across a cold river and eaten only nine hundred and twenty loaves of bread. "Dicho a Vostre Signorie che Quelle hanno una fanteria eletta e chapitani in tanto animosi che n'è da fare conto... Vostre Signorie hanno a chonosciere non hanno buttato via i loro denari, et tutte le imprese o chamino pare loro facile, et al comandarli io li trovo facilissimi et ubbidienti... et a me ànno questi satisfatto tanto quanto non lo potrei mai scrivere" [I say to Your Lordships that you have a select infantry and captains of considerable courage... Your Lordships must realize that you have not thrown away your money, and every undertaking and path seems easy to them, and commanding them I find them very manageable and obedient... and they have satisfied me more than I could ever write] [562]. On the other hand, Marcello admitted also that the attack on Monterotondo had been poorly coordinated. The Swiss had not arrived on time at the assembly point in Cantalupo and, lacking good reconnaissance services, which only cavalry forces used to acting in support of foot soldiers could provide, the troops of the League had marched deep into enemy-controlled territory "a uso di zinghani" [as gypsies do].

As according to plan, during the final stage of the approach to Monterotondo of the League's attack force the duke of Urbino sent a Venetian company of fifty mounted crossbowmen behind enemy lines to destroy the two bridges that could allow the enemy to withdraw to Rome. The Venetians, under the command of Captain Farferello, passed unnoticed by the Imperial scouts, but had unfortunately only taken with them instruments suitable for dismantling wooden bridges, and were unable to inflict serious damage on their supports, which were made of stone. At the same time, only a mile from Monterotondo, the advance of the League's troops was discovered when a group of Imperial light horsemen, who were actually looking for the men of Napoleone Orsini (the so-called 'abbot of Farfa'), ran into a detachment of Mantuan cavalry. During the ensuing skirmish, the Imperialists captured two men-at-arms and, after realizing the gravity of their situation, gave the alarm [563].

[561] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 15 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 197.

[562] Marcello Strozzi to the Ten, Narni, 21 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, ff. 91r-92v.

[563] Carlo Nuvoloni to the marquis of Mantua, 22 October 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, ff. 367r-368r.

The sound of the trumpets of the Imperial light cavalrymen giving their desperate alarm was a disagreeable surprise for both the Imperialists in Monterotondo and the advancing infantry of the League. "Restamo tutti spaventati" [We were all frightened], admitted Marcello Strozzi. Caught in the open and separated from the others as they were, "faciavamo mala pruova, et forse dolorosa fine" [we would have made a bad showing and perhaps come to a painful end] if the Imperialists had been prepared with two hundred arquebusiers and as many light horsemen. Marcello, who was walking ahead of the Black Bands to urge them on, found himself suddenly thrown into the action ("li nimici mi furono a un passo" [the enemies were a step away from me]), and was glad that the "tanto animosi" [very courageous] captains were always in the first rank with their flags, even after marching for two days, just like their men. In the past he had expressed a very different opinion of the Black Bands, but this experience induced him to reconsider it completely, "e se mai ne parlai altrimenti la experientia mi fa ridire, perché vogliono combattere" [and if I ever spoke differently of them, experience makes me speak otherwise, because they want to fight].

In the meantime the Venetian mounted crossbowmen, who were unaware that their main body had been sighted, had been trying to damage the bridges with their inadequate tools, so that they found themselves separated from the main body of the force, caught between the river and the retreating Imperialists. The duke's plan had therefore worked only on a very reduced scale – and against his own men. While the duke and the League's forces went back to Umbria and to their new winter quarters, Captain Farferello was forced to surrender with all his men, with the exception of two who drowned in the river while trying to avoid capture.

The planning and the execution of the failed attack against Monterotondo were criticised by Florence, which favoured a more defensive strategy. It should be noted, however, that the League's strike force had come extremely close to achieving a spectacular success. According to Sigismondo della Torre, Mantuan ambassador in Rome, "la pura et sola fortuna dello Imperatore" [simply the good luck of the Emperor] had saved the precious Imperial light cavalry from complete annihilation, "che veramente la cosa facillima da riuscire, et riuscendo era di estrema importanza a questo esercito" [for the matter was really easy to achieve, and success was of extreme importance for this army] [564]. Given the major role played by the Imperial light cavalry in the following campaign, it would have indeed been a major victory. In the following months, as the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples proceeded, the military leaders of the League would frequently have cause to regret the failure of a daring plan that had come so close to success.

As these events were taking place, Lorenzo Martelli and the remaining companies of the Black Bands had reached Montefalco on 16 October. However, the gates of the Umbrian town where the Florentine forces were to be quartered for the winter were found closed, as the numerous *villani* who had taken shelter inside Montefalco had managed to impose their wishes on the *cittadini*, who instead wanted to respect the instructions of the duke of Urbino. The *commissario*, who was admitted into the town for a few hours, spoke frankly to the *Priori*, reminding them of the risks Montefalco was taking by refusing to open its

[564] Sigismondo Fanzino della Torre to the maquis of Mantua, Rome, 23 October 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, ff. 210r-212v. See also Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVI, p. 294.

gates to the League's forces, but still the "villani havevono più forze drento di loro, et vollono star forti" [peasants were more numerous than they (the citizens), and wanted to resist]. Martelli was unable to restrain the Florentine forces from launching an assault against Montefalco which lasted almost two hours. However, "quei di drento" [those inside] managed to resist until 10.30 p.m., when the *commissario* managed to regain control of the troops and to reopen negotiations with the town's elders. The coming and going of envoys continued through the night until 4 a.m., when Martelli finally signed the terms proposed by the *Priori* of Montefalco, who agreed to quarter 4-500 footsoldiers in exchange for a general pardon and for permission either to send the women, *fanciulli* [children] and all the possessions they wanted (with the exclusion of victuals) out of town or to keep them in a separate part of it. The *commissario* had the captains and companies under his authority swear to observe the agreed terms and go to their assigned lodgings in Montefalco in an orderly way. For a while it seemed that everything would proceed smoothly.

However, unknown to Martelli, other events had been taking place during the night. After the end of the aborted assault against the city walls, the *villani*, who still opposed all dealings with the League's troops, continued to insult the Florentine troops from within the city walls "dicendo 'fiorentini qua et fiorentini là'" [saying 'Florentines here and Florentines there']. Some of them went even farther. They surrounded the house of the mother of Captain Lucantonio Cuppano, who was from Montefalco, "et cominciorono ad chiamarla puttana... et che l'abbrucerebbono in casa" [and began to call her a whore... saying that they would burn her in her house]. Eventually, some Florentine soldiers – from whose company the *commissario* did not know – managed to sneak into a small tower of Montefalco's medieval walls and, after slaying all its defenders, gain control of the annexed gate. At the crucial moment when the League's troops were about to enter the town, the rumour that two companies had already entered it began to spread among the soldiers. According to the customs of war, the agreement signed by Martelli was to be considered binding only if the Florentine troops had not managed to break Montefalco's defences before it could be implemented. If certain troops had already entered the town, nothing prevented the rest of the League's men from renewing their assault, which they did without waiting for a specific order and with great enthusiasm. Martelli quickly mounted a horse and rode along the line of fire, trying to re-establish order "non senza mio pericolo grande... et in questo mentre mi fu morto un fantaccino a lato a manco d'un trarre di mano" [not without great risk to myself... and at that moment a footsoldier was killed right beside me]. But it was too late. The *commissario* was forced to withdraw, while the Black Bands overcame the resistance of the defenders in Montefalco and proceeded to sack the town. The only thing Martelli could do was to place the local nunneries and two hundred other "donne et fanciulle da bene" [women and maidens of good family] under his protection. Having high regard for Captain Lucantonio, the captains of the Black Bands protected his houses and those of his relatives.

By the time signor Orazio arrived and joined Martelli in his effort to restrain the soldiery and mitigate the effects of the sack, which was nevertheless considered legitimate, thirty dead bodies lay in the streets of Montefalco.

Albeit dismayed by the lack of discipline in the troops, the *commissario* found consolation in the fact that "queste sono cose che dà la guerra. Et di questo io non ho a rendere conto

nessuno a Dio" [these are things of war. And I do not have to account to God for any of them], and that, though directed against the wrong target, the footsoldiers of the Black Bands had displayed great "braveria... che se la si potessi correggere, di fede credo che la potrìa ire per tutto" [valour... which, if it could be controlled, I sincerely believe could be used anywhere] [565].

[565] Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 17 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, ff. 199r-200v.

Appendix 4

The Wars at Sea II: the Invasion of Sardinia

"*Cosa bastarda non fu mai bona*" [566].

Provveditore Giovanni Moro on the 'bastard' galleys of his squadron

The first important naval operation carried out by ships of the League of Cognac after the arrival in Piedmont of the army of Lautrec in August 1527 was the blockade of the Genoese harbour of Portofino, enforced by seventeen French and Doria galleys under the command of *messer* Andrea, *condottiere* of the king of France and enemy of the pro-Imperialist *doge* of Genoa Antoniotto Adorno. Bottled up in the harbour and unable to disengage or fight, at least seven galleys (four Genoese and the three from the Spanish squadron of Sicily) and several *navi* [sailships] full of Sicilian wheat destined to supply Genoa were forced to surrender to Andrea Doria. This serious reverse, combined with the blockade of the city's harbour and the advance of a small force led by Cesare Fregoso (the rivalry between the Fregoso and Adorno families had conditioned Genoese politics for decades), persuaded his fellow citizens to expel the Imperial garrison, depose the Adorno *doge* and accept in his stead a governor – the Milanese noble Teodoro Trivulzio – appointed by the king of France [567].

This was a great blow for the Imperial forces in Italy, since the loss of Genoa, the Spanish 'doorway to Lombardy', ruled out the possibility of transferring troops by sea from the duchy of Milan to the Kingdom of Naples and vice versa, thereby seriously damaging the link between the Italian Habsburg possessions and Spain itself. Pressing its advantage, during the month of November the League of Cognac brought together its naval forces to launch a major expedition against the Kingdom of Sicily, the only place from which Naples could now hope to receive significant reinforcements and victuals. The plan was to land an expeditionary force of about three thousand Italian infantrymen in Palermo under the command of Renzo da Ceri, taking advantage of an uprising to be staged in the city by pro-French partisans, and then proceed to the conquest of the island with the help of the restless Sicilian *baroni* of the Angevin faction. If the expedition was successful there was little Spain could do to help the Imperial garrisons, cities and nobles that would remain faithful

[566] [Bastardly things were never any good].

[567] Francisco López de Gómara, *Guerras de mar del Emperador Carlos V*, edited by M.A. de Bunes Ibarra and N.E. Jimenez, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2000, pp. 112-113, Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, cit., f. 26r/v, Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., vol. III, pp. 1882-1884.

to the Aragonese party before the end of the winter. By the time reinforcements could be safely sent to Sicily from Spain, that is by mid-March, Naples itself would be under direct threat from an army of the League, and the only way to come to the aid of the besieged city would be to assemble a relief army in Austria that would have to reach the *Regno* by land, crossing first the Alps and then pushing its way through the territories of several Italian powers that had joined the anti-Imperialist front.

In the early days of November 1527 the thirty-six galleys (sixteen Venetian, fourteen French and six belonging to Andrea Doria) under the command of Andrea Doria and destined to embark Renzo da Ceri's expeditionary force were finally gathered in the Florentine harbour of Leghorn. However, the "impresa di Sicilia" [enterprise of Sicily] was prepared quite late in the Mediterranean sailing season, and from its earliest days, the winter of 1527-1528 turned out to be exceptionally harsh. On 13 November the fleet of the League left Leghorn heading for Civitavecchia, but contrary winds, heavy rains and the *fortune del mare* forced it to take shelter in the Sienese harbour of Porto Ercole, already in the hands of Doria troops, without going farther than the promontory of Monte Argentario. Thirteen days of fruitless waiting wore out both the men and the vessels; even the supplies of biscuit, the base of the crews' diet, reached a critical point. On 28 November the galleys of the League left Porto Ercole, but at that point Andrea Doria decided that, since there was no way of overcoming the contrary winds, the only option left was to follow them towards the open sea, change the target of the expedition and launch an attack on Sardinia (also a Spanish possession) instead of Sicily. Damaged by a storm that had separated them from the main body, four Venetian galleys were forced to return to Leghorn in very bad shape. Half the Venetian squadron was made up of *bastarde* galleys (see Appendix 2), but instead of an asset (*bastarde* galleys were supposed to be more seaworthy than the *sottili*) these were turning out to be more of a hindrance. According to Venetian squadron commander Giovanni Moro, the *bastarde* under his command simply absorbed more resources than the others, while at the same time slowing down the whole squadron by forcing the *sottili* to wait for them or even tow them [568].

In spite of the *fortune del mare*, the fleet of the League finally reached first Porto Vecchio in Corsica (at that time under the dominion of the Genoese republic) and then Sardinia. The troops of Renzo da Ceri disembarked at Longo Sardo and travelled through the interior of the Gallura region, living on the land and looting villages, then reached the shoreline to meet the galleys and launch a combined attack on the coastal fortified town of Castel Aragonese (today Castel Sardo), where Andrea Doria hoped to provide his fleet with biscuit. After cannonading the town from three sides for five hours, the galleys of the League moored on the beach stern-first and put ashore all the men they could in support of Renzo da Ceri's troops who were trying to take the walls by storm. Lacking artillery, the soldiers of the League suffered heavy losses and failed to overcome the stiff resistance mounted by the Imperialists and town residents before a storm forced the fleet to re-embark the landing parties and abandon the siege in haste, taking shelter near the small island of Asinara. Da Ceri's force turned again towards the interior and, after easily dispersing a much larger force made up mostly of Sardinian militiamen near the town of

[568] Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVI, pp. 289, 446.

Sorso, marched on the city of Sassari which opened its gates without offering resistance. There Renzo da Ceri found enough victuals to sustain his troops and the fleet, which, now scattered between the Asinara and Porto Torres, was running out of biscuit. However, by then the frequent engagements, epidemics, malnourishment and sheer exhaustion had already decimated the small contingent of Italian infantry, which in the end was unable to assist the fleet in the planned attack against the main objective of the expedition: the fortified port city of Alghero, on the island's west coast. Andrea Doria, whose crews had fared even worse than da Ceri's soldiers, made an attempt to conquer Alghero from the sea without the support of the infantry, but the Imperial governor and the garrison refused to give up, and the fire of the harbour's ordnance was intense enough to keep the League's galleys at bay and eventually force the Genoese admiral to admit defeat and withdraw his fleet [569].

The Sardinian enterprise had been a considerable, costly failure. By the end of January 1528 all the galleys of the fleet were "rovinate et infette d'ogni malattia" [ruined and infected with all types of illness]. According to Spanish sources, the League lost three thousand men (soldiers, sailors and oarsmen) without causing any substantial damage to the enemy's capacity to transport troops by sea between Spain and Italy. Without the conquest of a fortified port with adequate facilities for the galleys (or at least some of them) to winter, it would be impossible for the fleet of the League to continue its campaign or even to remain in Sardinia. Even worse, it was clear that until they were refitted and re-manned, most of the galleys would not play any useful role in direct support of the French army, which had entered the Kingdom of Naples on 10 January 1528, much less launch an invasion against Sicily. On 26 January eight Venetian galleys entered the harbour of Leghorn, followed a few days later by the rest of the fleet. As was to be expected, once in Leghorn the disagreements between the commander of the ground troops and the admiral exploded. After spending a few days in Pisa recovering from illness, Renzo da Ceri went to the French court where he accused Andrea Doria of actively opposing and sabotaging the project for the invasion of Sicily from the start, pleading lack of provisions and bad weather as his excuse. Far more concerned with the delicate political situation of his native city than with his dwindling reputation at the French court, Andrea Doria placed his nephew Filippino Doria (?-1531) in command of the Genoese squadron (made up of seven galleys owned by the admiral and one belonging to his relative Antonio Doria) intended to give sea support to Lautrec's invasion of the Kingdom of Naples and left for Genoa with the rest of the Doria and French naval forces. Needing some preliminary refitting and a large quantity of biscuit before it could face the long and difficult return journey to Corfu, the Venetian squadron was the last to leave the harbour of Leghorn.

[569] My main sources on the expedition against Sardinia have been, Gómara, *Guerras de mar*, pp. 112-113, Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVI, pp. 264, 289, 293, 446, 540-2; Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, ff. 27v-28r, 29v-30r.; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., vol. III, pp. 1888-1889.

Appendix 5

The Massacre of Melfi
(24 March 1528)

"*È suto horribile spettacolo...*" [570].

Marco del Nero to the Ten, 24 March 1528

When the Imperial army, taking advantage of its superior mobility, hastily broke camp and headed for Naples, Lautrec chose not to pursue the enemy. Seeing that the war would continue for some time, the captain general decided instead to secure the position of his army and the line of supplies by reducing the remaining Imperial strongholds in the area, the most conspicuous being Melfi, a city of approximately 2,000 *fochi* [571] [homes]. Giovanni Caracciolo, prince of Melfi, was in charge of the defence and could count on nine companies of Italian infantry and his own band of heavy cavalry, consisting of about 2,000 men. On 23 March the Gascon troops under the command of Pedro Navarro and the Black Bands – that is, over 8,000 footsoldiers, the best assault troops of the League's army – arrived with two pieces of heavy artillery under the walls of Melfi, which once again refused to submit to the authority of the League.

After a first cannonade had brought down a short stretch of wall, the Black Bands, eager to enter before the Gascons, hurled themselves into the breach without waiting either for their captains' orders or for the end of the bombardment. As a result, in addition to the losses due to the intense arquebus fire from the shoulders of the bastions [572], many casualties were caused by the friendly fire of the French artillery [573]. For two hours six companies of the Black Bands – soldiers "de' più eletti et arditi che vi fusse in quelle bande" [of the most select and courageous there were in those Bands] – battled under Melfi's walls before being driven back with the loss of about seventy men, including five standard-bearers and many "homini da conto" [people of account] [574]. The Gascons arrived second, but fared no better and suffered even heavier losses.

[570] "It was a terrible sight...".

[571] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 30 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 175v.

[572] Marco del Nero to the Ten, Leonella, 24 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 442r; see also Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 1918-1019.

[573] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, Melfi, 24 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 413r.

[574] Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 23 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 183r.

A further attempt to take Melfi by storm, launched at 11 p.m., turned into another setback for the Florentine troops, which were repelled and lost even more soldiers than in the morning. Moreover, the losses of the Black Bands were made particularly grievous by the fact that among the fallen were many veterans and other *homini da bene*, such as the valiant Francesco Strozzi, to whom Soderini had planned to give the command of a company of the Black Bands.

During the night, while the troops of the League were licking their wounds and brooding, more French heavy guns arrived in the camp, eventually followed by Lautrec himself. According to the Mantuan ambassador in the League's camp, the captain general was so angered by the resistance of Melfi that he declared the city "a sacco, a morte che non se salvassi di quelli de la terra alchuno" [to be sacked and put to death, not sparing anyone in the city]. Within the city walls, Melfi's elders implored Caracciolo not to cause their total ruin, but he remained deaf to their entreaties and assured them that outside the walls there were no more than four thousand infantrymen with only four small-calibre pieces. In all likelihood the prince still hoped that the League's army would move quickly towards Naples to keep the pressure on the main body of the Imperial army, and that it could hardly afford to waste time and resources on reducing Melfi. His hopes, however, were dashed during the night because the pounding not only continued but even became more and more intense as Navarro set up the new cannons brought from the nearby main camp of the League. Finally, at dawn, the defence collapsed: the citizens of Melfi raised a white flag and started to shout "Franza!" [France!], while the prince, unable to regain control of the situation, withdrew into the citadel along with his remaining troops. Unfortunately for Melfi's *popolo*, it was too late to surrender: the protracted and furious bombardment of the League's batteries had already opened too many large gaps, leaving the town practically defenceless and with nothing left to negotiate. Excited by the prospect of the sack and eager to avenge their fallen comrades, the Black Bands and the Gascons poured into Melfi, and the slaughter began.

"Ogni cosa si empiè di sangue" [Everything was filled with blood] [575]: the troops of the League put to the sword all the soldiers who had been unable to take shelter in the citadel and all the inhabitants of Melfi they were able to lay hands on. The prince of Melfi tried to surrender on honourable terms, but in the end the best he could do was to hand over the citadel and his person to Lautrec himself *a discretione*. At this stage the defenders assumed that at least their lives would be spared, "ma non l'havendo intesa così li nostri" [but our men, not having understood it this way], wrote del Nero, "similmente tagliorono a pezi tutti loro" [in the same way cut everyone to pieces]. Only the direct personal intervention of the captain general of the League saved the lives of the prince and his family. A handful of *gentilhomini* and officers managed to surrender to various captains of the League, but the others were all slaughtered. In fact, the man the soldiers of the Black Bands wanted most to kill was Caracciolo: his resistance, they said, had been futile and unreasonable, and had caused the death of too many good soldiers.

The next morning, when the Black Bands and the Gascons left the city at the end of the twenty-four hours granted by Lautrec for the sack, over three thousand dead bodies (some

[575] Santoro, *Dei successi*, cit., p. 43.

sources double this figure) lay in the streets of Melfi; most were men, though also "infinite donne sono state morte, menate via, e molte salvate" [countless women were killed, others abducted and many saved] [576]. The booty from the sack of Melfi was a rich one, but its division prompted many complaints from the captains of the Black Bands, who greatly resented the fact that much of the plunder had ended up in the greedy hands of Orazio Baglioni, who had neither fought nor risked his life for it [577].

It must be observed that the brutal sack and massacre perpetrated in Melfi by the Tuscan and Gascon troops, though exceedingly bloody even to contemporary eyes, was carried out in accordance with the customs of war and on the orders of Lautrec, who had decided to make the small Apulian city an example for the other centres that still remained faithful to the emperor, and whose resistance could interfere with his army's advance towards Naples. The massacre of Melfi neither stained the reputation of the captain general of the League, nor did it bring particular shame on Pedro Navarro or Orazio Baglioni. Indeed Baglioni actually ended his short report to the Ten on the sack by saying that "quantunque habia persi delli homini da bene, semo restati con honore, et Monsignor Illustrissimo se trova assai satisfacto delle Excelse Signorie Vostre, di me, et di tucte queste bande" [however many valiant men I have lost, we maintained our honour, and *Monsignor Illustrissimo* is satisfied with Your Distinguished Lordships, with me, and with all these bands] [578].

[576] Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 24 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 186r.

[577] Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 26 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 46r.

[578] Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 30 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 175v. For other versions of the events that led to the sack of Melfi, see also du Bellay, *Mémoires*, cit., vol. XVIII, pp. 84-85.

Appendix 6

The Wars at Sea III: The Battle of Capo d'Orso (28 April 1528)

"... *mai più fu sì crudel et così orenda baruffa*" [579].

Paolo Giovio to Clement VII,
on the Kalends of May 1528

On 27 April 1528, a hand-picked contingent of seven hundred veteran Spanish and German soldiers [580] was embarked on a patchy Imperial squadron consisting of all the vessels fit for combat available in the harbour of Naples: six Spanish and Italian galleys, two *fuste*, three *brigantini* and an unspecified number of armed skiffs. Alfonso d'Avalos was in command of the embarked troops, while the Genoese *condottiere* of the sea Fabrizio Giustiniani (nicknamed *il gobbo* [the hunchback], an enemy of the Doria family) was in command of the fleet. The strategy and aims of the mission, however, were decided by Don Hugo de Moncada, who joined the expedition with all his staff officers. Although the sortie of the Imperial galleys caused great apprehension in the camp of the League [581], Count Filippino Doria had already been informed of the Spanish preparations by a spy, and Lautrec, who had no experience in maritime warfare, had left him free to choose the best line of action. At the request of the Genoese commander, who decided to rely mainly on the fighting skill of his Ligurian sailors and naval soldiers, only three hundred Gascon arquebusiers under the command of captain Gilbert du Crocq were sent to Salerno in a

[579] "... never was there such a cruel and horrendous fight".

[580] The first and most famous account of the battle of Capo d'Orso was given by Paolo Giovio in his detailed letter to Clement VII (Giovio, *Lettere*, cit., pp. 118-123 – but also in Sanuto, *I diarii*, cit., XLVI, pp. 664 ff.) written while the historian was still on board a Genoese galley off Salerno, and large passages of which were later included by Giovio in *La seconda parte dell'Historie*, cit., pp. 56v-62r. During the siege of Naples Giovio was in Ischia and, while on a mission for his hostess, the wife of the marquis of Vasto, worried about the fate of her husband (see T.C. Price Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio: the Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 102-105), thanks to his excellent connections was able to speak with the victors (he was also a good friend of Filippino Doria) and the losers the very day after the battle. I have integrated the account of Giovio with information coming from the letters of the Florentine and Mantuan ambassadors in the camp of the League, with the account of the battle written by the Spanish historian Francisco Lopez de Gómara (in *Guerras de mar*, cit., pp. 113-115), with the account of the events sent by Moncada's secretary Miguel de Aguorreta to Charles V (now in CO.DO.IN., cit., XXIV, pp. 502-508) and with the *Historie di Genova* by the Genoese historian Giovanni Salvago (ff. 33v-35r).

[581] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 268r; Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 1 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 249r.

great hurry to reinforce the crews of his eight galleys, but when they left the camp no one could really say if they would arrive on time.

Fortunately for the League, the Imperialists first went to Pozzuoli, where they rested for the night. On the next day the squadron made a stop at the island of Capri, where Moncada and his men dined with pomp and even found the time to listen to the sermon of a resident Portuguese hermit, who encouraged them to fight bravely against the Genoese, those "mori bianchi" [white Moors] who kept so many valiant Spaniards chained to the oars. It was in Capri that Moncada – after receiving news from beyond Punta Campanella that the League's squadron, far from abandoning the field, had left Salerno and was rowing against the wind to meet them – managed to overcome the qualms, still shared by most of his galley captains and even by some of his staff officers, about the advisability of fighting a pitched naval engagement. Given his experience in maritime warfare, it is possible that Moncada chose to slow down the course of his fleet in order to give Filippino Doria enough time to gather his forces and then confront all those who had followed him up to that point with a *fait accompli*. Whatever the cause, the delay had given du Crocq's Gascon arquebusiers time to embark on the Doria galleys before they had to leave Salerno harbour. Moreover, when the Imperial squadron doubled Punta Campanella it was soon sighted by the fast Genoese *fregate* and *brigantini* cruising off the coast, and its exact strength was quickly reported to Count Filippino.

Moncada's plan was quite easy to predict. He wanted his force to come to grips with as many enemy galleys as was possible, literally flood the bridges with his Spanish crack troops and overcome the resistance of the Genoese crews as quickly as possible, before Filippino could exploit the superior firepower of his squadron. Moreover, once the mêlée had begun and all the galleys were locked, Moncada's *fuste* and *brigantini* – which would be hopelessly outclassed in a head-on clash with a galley – and even the cutters towed by his squadron could come into play, attacking the exposed sides and sterns of the more powerful enemy vessels.

Considering that this was probably his last chance to engage the Imperial galleys under such favourable conditions before the arrival of the Venetian fleet would force them to take refuge in Naples harbour for the rest of the siege, the Genoese commander decided to accept Moncada's challenge, though without sharing his opponent's haste to come to blows. Filippino was aware that his squadron had more galleys and more artillery than the enemy's, and that he could count on a unified team of skilled *comiti* (galley captains) who were intensely loyal to his uncle. But he also knew that a force of six galleys willing to risk a battle against eight galleys would certainly be carrying more soldiers, and that by the time the two squadrons sighted each other, his would be sailing against the wind and his men would have the sun in their eyes. Filippino was a cautious commander and decided to boost his ships' fighting complements by striking a deal with the Christian non-Spanish *forzati* and with the Turkish and Moorish oarsmen chained to the benches of his galleys: freedom in exchange for their help against the common enemy during the imminent battle. The Muslims, inspired by both the hope of unexpected liberty and hatred of Moncada, who had led the Spanish fleet in several raids against the Barbary states of North Africa, accepted eagerly. At the same time, the Genoese count took the necessary steps to decide on both the location of the battlefield and the time at which it would begin. When the Imperialists

Table 5. The Author's Reconstruction of the Order of Battle of the Opposing Squadrons.

Naples Squadron	Doria Squadron
(Patrona) ***Gobba***	
Santa Barbara	***Pellegrina***
Sant'Andrea	***Donzella***
Capitana	***Capitana***
Perpignana	***Fortuna***
Calabresa	***Sirena***
	Reserve:
	Mora
	Nettuno (Patrona)
	Signora

arrived at three miles from Salerno, they discovered that the Doria galleys were no longer heading for Punta Campanella, but were positioned behind Capo d'Orso's promontory, waiting for the right moment to offer battle, 'entrenched' (so to speak) in an almost unassailable position. This standoff lasted until well after sunset, when Filippino gave his captains the signal to leave the shelter of Capo d'Orso. At 9 p.m., therefore, the two squadrons at last faced each other (Table 5).

By that time, however, the strong wind that had sprung up on the open sea had partially disarranged the Imperial force. As Moncada's galleys rushed forward to engage those of the League, his *fuste*, *brigantini* and cutters were unable to keep their positions and found themselves distanced from the main body. On the other side, to thwart Moncada's obvious intentions, Count Filippino decided to create a reserve consisting of the *Signora* and the *Nettuno* (the *patrona* galley, i.e. vice-*capitana*, of the Doria squadron) which, by avoiding the initial clash, would be free to manoeuvre, use its artillery and enter the fray both at the right moment and from an advantageous position. The idea of the Genoese commander was to face the enemy initially with an equal number of galleys opposing prow to prow, but just as his cunning plan was beginning to unfold, something went wrong. The captain of a third ship (presumably the *Mora* under the command of Niccolò Lomellini – the only galley in the squadron which belonged not to *messer* Andrea but to his relative Antonio Doria) misinterpreted his signals and joined the two that were intended to steer southwards, in the direction of the open sea, leaving Filippino with only five galleys against Moncada's six [582].

Overtaking the other ships and breaking the line-abreast of the Imperial squadron, Moncada's *capitana* rushed towards the Doria flagship, and was hit by what was probably one of the most famous cannon shots of the sixteenth century. The ball fired by the centreline *basilisco* of Filippino's galley ran through the *rembata*, literally clearing the gangway between the rowing benches, which was crammed with soldiers, and smashed against the poop deck, instantly killing the galley's second-in-command and most of the officers, while

[582] Salvago, *Historie di Genova*, cit., f. 34r.

the other smaller pieces decimated the oarsmen. Almost forty men died immediately, smearing the survivors with blood and entrails. The riposte of Moncada's ship, on the other hand, caused little damage to Filippino's *capitana*, which had altered its angle of approach immediately after discharging its main battery under cover of the resulting cloud of smoke. As the prows of the two flagships collided and their crews started a deadly struggle destined to last for the rest of the battle, the *Gobba* (the galley of *gobbo* Fabrizio Giustiniani, probably the *patrona* of the squadron of Naples), the *Santa Barbara* and the *Sant'Andrea* (the only galleys left without a proper 'name' in Giovio's letter, which refers to them by their captains' names) ran into the *Pellegrina* and the *Donzella*. The Spaniards boarded them and eventually overwhelmed the Genoese/Gascon resistance. The *Perpignana* and *Calabresa* ran into the isolated *Sirena*, which had found itself separated from the *Fortuna*, and captured a third Doria galley. Eventually, the *Fortuna* and Filippino's *capitana* were practically surrounded, and the League's fleet faced a crushing defeat.

However, *Fortuna* [Lady Luck] had by no means abandoned Andrea Doria's nephew. The return of the three Genoese galleys which had left the formation at the start of the battle reversed the situation. This was because all Moncada's galleys were locked and unable to manoeuvre to face the new threat that was about to crush into their exposed sterns and flanks, while many of their fighting men were dispersed among the prize-crews on the three captured enemy vessels. Even though the Doria reserve galleys had been unable to keep the line-abreast during their broad outflanking manoeuvre and were now lined up in an echelon formation – a fact that (according to the Genoese commander) considerably reduced the effects of their fire – their attack against the Imperial centre and right flank turned the tide of the battle. Their first target was the Imperial *capitana*: the cannonballs of the *Mora* destroyed its rudder; those of the *Nettuno* knocked down its mainmast, killing many and wreaking havoc on the deck; and those of the *Signora* badly damaged its prow and shattered the spur. While the *Mora* kept its course and ran into the flank of Moncada's flagship to relieve Count Filippino from his predicament, the *Nettuno* and the *Signora* battered the *Gobba* from afar, reducing it to a floating wreck which was easily captured. Captain Giustiniani was badly wounded and Cesare Fieramosca, a squire of Charles V (see Appendix 1), was killed. Of the one hundred and eight Spanish arquebusiers who had been part of Captain Baredo's company embarked on the *Gobba*, one hundred and three were killed, and as many as seven standard bearers, one after another, died holding the company's flag. The two Doria galleys then turned their attention to the two Catalan galleys that, along with the *Gobba*, had made up the left side of the Imperialist battle array. While the *Nettuno* collided with the *Sant'Andrea*, whose commander, Don Bernardo Villamarin, died enveloped by the flames that destroyed his galley, the *Signora* ran into the *Santa Barbara*, where Captain Sechanies fell, his throat transfixed by an arquebus ball. Both Imperialist galleys were eventually sunk.

Don Hugo de Moncada died on the *capitana* of Naples, after being hit by an arquebus shot in his right arm and a *falconetto* ball in his left thigh while, brandishing his *spada* and *rotella*, he bravely led his men on the *corsia* of his ship under the devastating crossfire of the gunners and arquebusiers of the *Mora* and of Doria's flagship. Along with Don Hugo died all the oarsmen and the one hundred and fifty hand-picked Spanish soldiers embarked on his ships. The Moorish ex-slaves regained the *Donzella*, fighting like "lioni scatenati"

[unchained lions], according to Giovio. The two *fuste* were captured and the other smaller vessels were easily dispersed or sunk. When the captains of the *Perpignana* and the *Calabresa* saw the Imperial standard fall and were aware of the collapse of their right wing, they decided that the battle was lost and, to cut the already heavy losses, they disengaged their ships and headed for Naples. Aware that their refusal to keep on fighting, in an effort to turn the tide of battle, could be regarded as an act of cowardice, Captain Francesco di Lauria (who claimed to be a descendant of the great Italian admiral in Aragonese service Ruggiero di Lauria – c. 1245-1304) eventually moored his *Calabresa* on the shore near the besieging camp and entered negotiations with the League. The captain of the *Perpignana*, instead, pleaded his cause in front of the prince of Orange, but the arguments he adduced in support of his conduct did not completely convince the Imperial captain general, who had him hanged.

The battle of Capo d'Orso, probably the bloodiest naval engagement of the Italian Wars, was fought between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m., and, according to Giovio, "mai più fu sì crudel et così horrenda baruffa" [never was there such a cruel and horrendous fight]; after the first furious discharge of the galleys' stern batteries, thousands of Spanish, Italian, French, Turkish, North African and German soldiers, seamen and oarsmen faced each other in furious mêlées, contending every inch of the long and narrow decks of the *mescolate* [mixed] ships. Most of the soldiers embarked on the ships of the Imperial squadron carried some sort of defensive *arme bianche*, whereas the Ligurian seamen and naval arquebusiers who made up the bulk of the fighting complements of the Doria galleys were *disarmati*, that is without armour, and wore only shirts and breeches.

In his *Historie* Giovio reports the war cry bellowed by the Genoese sailors and soldiers after the rallying speech made by Count Filippino when he decided to commit his squadron to battle. According to Captain du Crocq, however, the morale of the Italians before the battle was, to say the least, very low, and they considered themselves as good as dead. As Moncada intended, the idea of meeting the elite of the Imperial army – the plunderers of Rome, the victors of Bicocca and Pavia – was enough to undermine anyone's confidence. But as it turned out, it was not enough. As the same du Crocq confided to the Mantuan ambassador, during the battle the Italians succeeded in overcoming their fears and performing incredible deeds. Even though they were either overwhelmed or forced to take a defensive stand by the onslaught of the Spanish boarding parties, the morale of Count Filippino's *homini di bragessa* [men in breeches] did not collapse. Agile "come caprioli et limpardi" [like roes and leopards] as they moved on the decks, jumping from one place to another, the Ligurian seamen continued to fight. They used their swords and bucklers with considerable skill, threw javelins and dropped stones and firepots from the lateen yards. With deadly accuracy they also fired very large arquebuses, whose balls "di uncia una et meza" [weighing an ounce and a half] could run through three or four men with a single shot or pierce the wooden pavisades mounted along the sides of the Spanish galleys. Standing amassed on the *corsie* of their galleys, the Spanish soldiers found themselves particularly exposed to the Genoese seamen-arquebusiers, who instead fired from a recumbent position in the *posticcio* (the galleys' rowing frame) and from behind the *pavesate*, and paid a high price for their lack of specific training in maritime warfare. Yet, thanks to their sheer bravery the Spaniards almost won the day, and had they captured the *Fortuna* and

Filippino's flagship before Doria's reserve galleys successfully completed their outflanking manoeuvre, the final outcome of the battle could have been very different.

In the end fourteen hundred sailors, oarsmen and soldiers died on the Imperial side, while about one thousand Spaniards (most of them wounded) were taken prisoner and swiftly chained to the rowing benches of Filippino's galleys. These numbers alone, however, give no real measure of the losses, especially in the case of the Spanish infantrymen, who had been "lo fior del campo et delli veterani" [the elite of the camp and of the veterans] [583], the finest arquebusiers of the Imperial army [584]. Moreover, among the fallen and the prisoners were many *homini de qualità* and high-ranking officers of the Imperial army. The whole staff of Hugo de Moncada had been wiped out and Girolamo da Trani, captain-general of the Imperial ordnance, had also died. As for Alfonso d'Avalos, marquis of Vasto, he was among the very few survivors of the crew of Moncada's *capitana* at the end of the battle. He managed to survive only because his beautifully gilded armour marked him out as someone worth a good ransom, sparing him the indignity of being killed by a certain Pasqualino, a Genoese "homo di bragessa et di baretta turchina" [man with breeches and a turquoise beret]. Alfonso d'Avalos and the other few survivors among the *nobili* who had defended the stern of the Imperial *capitana* managed to surrendered personally to Niccolò Lomellini, commander of the *Mora*. The losses of the League, on the other hand, amounted in total to five hundred men.

The victory of the Doria squadron was a powerful boost to the morale of the League's troops, and was celebrated in the besiegers' camp with trumpet blasts and cannonades. However, Count Filippino's triumph did not produce any visible effects on the actual siege of Naples. The losses suffered by the Imperialists had been grievous, but not catastrophic, and, above all, the destruction of the squadron of Naples could not, and did not, significantly reduce the harbour's defensive potential. From the naval point of view, the only tangible result of Doria's victory, apart from the capture of a few galleys, was the surrender of the harbour of Pozzuoli to the League's forces a few days after the battle. The Doria galleys were still too few to enforce an effective blockade, and they were now also badly damaged. At the same time Ischia and Gaeta remained firmly in Imperial hands.

[583] Giovio, *Lettere*, cit., vol. I, p. 122

[584] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 268r.

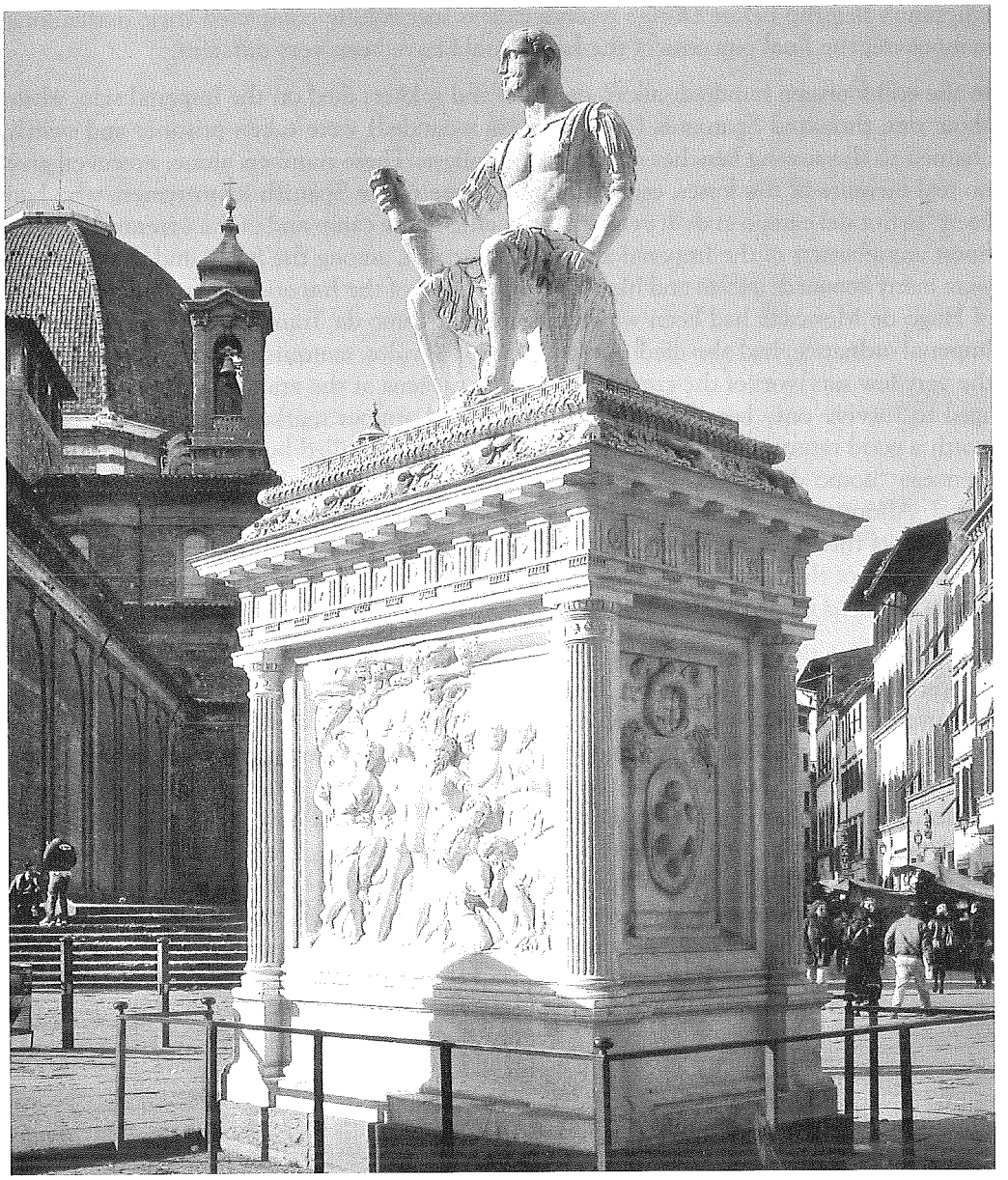


Figure 18
Baccio Bandinelli, *Monument of Giovanni de' Medici*, 1540-1554 (Piazza San Lorenzo, Florence).

"Fra tutte le statue di Firenze, la statua di Giovanni dalle Bande Nere è quella che più si meriterebbe un par di ceffoni nel muso" [Among all the statues of Florence, the statue of Giovanni of the Black Bands is the one which most deserves a couple of slaps in the face].
Curzio Malaparte (1898-1957), *Maledetti toscani.*

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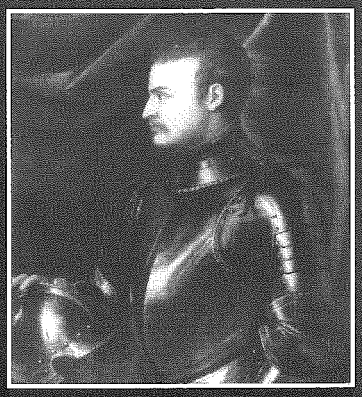

Today the name of Giovanni de' Medici (1498-1526), better known as Giovanni of the Black Bands, is still largely linked to the heroic and tragic figure created by nineteenth-century Risorgimento historiography and literature. First the renown of the so-called 'Medici warrior', and then his sudden oblivion as the result of more up-to-date historiographic methods, have obscured both his true story and that of the men to whom he owed his fame.

This is a study not of Giovanni himself but of the Black Bands – the first famous unit of Italian infantry in the pike-and-shot era. Based on unpublished documentary sources, the volume traces the Bands' story from the time of their birth in the days following Giovanni's death on 30 November 1526 until their surrender and disbandment at Aversa on 30 August 1528.

Although they were but a simple pawn in the dramatic end game between the Empire and France for supremacy in Italy, the Black Bands nonetheless drew the attention of all the principal 'players'. The last Florentine Republic entrusted them with most of its hopes for survival. In the course of two consecutive campaigns culminating in the great siege of Naples (1528), whose dramatic outcome would affect the balance of power in Italy and Europe for decades, Giovanni de' Medici's 'orphans' consolidated the fame of their late master and soon established their own legend.

In recounting their story, the volume examines the practice of war in the Early Modern Age, highlighting interactions between the political world and the changing realities of the battlefield.

Maurizio Arfaioli (Susa, 1967) received his laurea degree in History from the University of Pisa and his Ph.D. from the University of Warwick (UK). Early modern Italian political and military history is at the centre of his research interests. While Fellow of the Villa I Tatti Institute he has broadened his research to the Italian troops in Flanders during the Eighty Years' War. He collaborates with the European History Network, CLIOHnet, and with various research groups at the University of Pisa.

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